

'Sabotage or attack on Limburg ruled out'

Not - 9 OCT 2002

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed any possibility of sabotage or an attack on French supertanker Limburg.

An explosion on Sunday left a gaping hole in the hull of the supertanker, chartered by Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas), while it was off the capital city of Yemen's southeastern Hadramaut.

"No, there is no sabotage or attack. I

was informed that the fire on the vessel was caused by an electrical circuit.

"This (electrical circuit) could happen as the ship was carrying crude oil," he told newsmen after delivering his keynote address at the China Economic Conference in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

In a statement, Petronas said the vessel was loaded with about 400,000 barrels of Arab heavy crude oil from Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia.

It was on its way to load another 1.5 million barrels of Masila crude at Ash Shihri in Yemen when the incident occurred. The cargo was purchased for Petronas' joint-venture Malaysian Refining Company in Malacca.

Based on Petronas report, Dr Mahathir said there no suspicion of sabotage.

"That (sabotage or attack) information can only be from CNN. CNN suspects everything," he quipped.

The French embassy in Sanaa had earlier said that the blast on the vessel was caused by a small boat packed with explosives that rammed the tanker, but the French Foreign Ministry later said there was no evidence so far on an attack. Asked on the losses expected to be incurred by Petronas over the incident, Dr Mahathir said the losses will not be too much as the ship was insured. — *By Kamarul Yunus and Ramlan Said*