

09/02/2003

Image of KLIA at stake

Ramlan Said

BERITA Harian wants the special committee established to address weaknesses in the baggage handling system at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to act fast as the image of the airport is at stake.

Its editorial on Wednesday touched on the breakdown of the system on Feb 3 and threw a poser to the airport management: Could the weaknesses be rectified before the start of the Non-Aligned Movement summit?

The newspaper said the committee would have to institute steps to ensure such incident would not recur.

"KLIA cannot afford to have its name tarnished because of problems in its baggage handling system which also affects passengers and flight schedules. This is in addition to other problems it is facing; like theft and baggage pilfering."

The move by a Selangor-based company to sue the Terengganu Government over a logging concession was front-paged by Berita Harian on Tuesday.

The company, SKKPJ (TM) Sdn Bhd, wanted the Pas Government to compensate it RM1.3 billion for failing to honour a logging contract covering an area of 16,400ha in Hulu Terengganu. It claimed the State Government only issued a permit to log an area of 480ha. It further claimed timber from the area were seized and sold.

Failure by the State Government to honour the agreement, said the company, forced its proposed listing on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange to be aborted.

The Pas Government responded to the claims the next day, with the two Bahasa Malaysia dailies reporting Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Hadi Awang defending the move, claiming everything was done within the law.

A Universiti Sains Malaysia professor on attachment with the West Virginia City under the Fulbright Scholarship Programme appealed to all quarters not to sensationalise his arrest for a traffic offence in the US.

Prof Mohamad Ghouse said the matter had been resolved, adding that a TV3 report stating that he was jailed was not true.

Earlier reports had suggested that racial and religion profiling by US authorities could have played a role in his detention.

Utusan Malaysia published on Thursday and Friday a two-part article by former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin where he discussed the imminent US-led war on Iraq and the inability of the Arab world to stop it. If Arab countries are united, the US could be persuaded to halt its aggression.

Instead of the Arabs, he said, it was volunteers from Western countries who were going to Iraq to act as human shields.

"Opposition is only apparent in Syria and Morocco. I am wondering whether the West would dare to invade Iraq if Arab countries act collectively in opposing the war and send thousands of volunteers to Iraq.

"If Arab countries could garner a few thousand Europeans and Americans to go to Iraq, many are convinced that the decision to attack will be reviewed."

Daim, who is also Merbok MP, said opposing the war was not about Saddam Hussein but the people of Iraq - men, women and children.

"No matter how modern and sophisticated the weapons are, many innocent lives will be lost."

Berita Harian on Friday reported that Pas believed Parliament would be dissolved before October to pave the way for a general election.

It quoted the party's acting president Hadi as saying Prime Minister

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's assurance that the polls would not be held before he steps down in October was only a ruse to trap the Opposition.

"I prefer to read the opposite in Dr Mahathir's statement. It is not final as he can announce the dissolution of Parliament anytime."

Hadi claimed there were many signs pointing to an early election which was not due until 2005.

Utusan Malaysia has the Election Commission advising voters to register early to ensure their names would make it to the electoral roll.