

Chopper crash: Pilot dies, DPM's aide unhurt
Malaysiakini.com
April 11, 2011

A helicopter crashed when taking off from Dataran Sibu in the heart of the city at 1.50pm today after its three passengers, including an aide to Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, had already disembarked.

The pilot, who was the only one inside when it happened, was rushed to the Sibu Hospital.

Press secretary to the education minister, Hafiz Abdul Halim, who was walking towards the RH Hotel, less than 100m from the square when it happened, was shocked.

"There was no problem with the helicopter when we took off from Bintangor or during the ride. I was walking towards the hotel when I heard a crash," said Hafiz, who was with two security officers in the helicopter.

Muhyiddin and his special officer had landed at the same square in separate helicopters shortly before the incident. They were also returning from Bintangor.

"The deputy prime minister and his entourage are safe," Hafiz said.

The helicopter, chartered from Sabah Air, is resting on its right on the field after the crash.

An eyewitness said she heard the sound of an explosion but no fire was seen coming from the aircraft.

"(There was) an explosion, but no fire," said Ipah Philip, 54, a cleaner.

Another witness Mohamed Nazri Zakaria saw the crash from his room on the 13th floor of the hotel.

"The passengers had already got down and the helicopter was taking off again. The pilot appeared to be injured and was rushed away by ambulance," he said.

The first two helicopters had already taken off to return to the Sibu airport. The third was to have followed suit.

Bintangor is about 20 minutes flight from Sibu.

Pilot died at 8.30pm

Captain Sahimi Razali, who was seriously injured, died at the Sibu Hospital at 8.30pm tonight.

Sibu OCPD ACP Shafie Ismail said Sahimi's family would travel to Sibu from Kuala Lumpur tonight to make funeral arrangements.

The Bell 206 helicopter belonging to Sabah Air crashed at 1.50pm after three passengers, including the aide, disembarked from the aircraft.

Sahimi, 38, sustained rib injuries and was sent to the hospital by Civil Defence Department personnel.

Shafie said the helicopter, which had just arrived from Bintangor, Sarikei, was one of three ferrying Muhyiddin's delegation which was on a visit to Sibul.

He said that as soon as all the passengers had disembarked, the helicopter took off for Sibul airport.

"Suddenly, the helicopter, which was at a height of about three metres, was believed to have gone out of control before crashing," he told reporters today.

Shafie said the pilot, who was the only person in the helicopter, was pinned in the aircraft before members of the public extricated him.

"The cause of the accident is still being investigated. The Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) will send a team tomorrow to carry out an investigation," he said.

Muhyiddin and his wife Noorainee Abdul Rahman visited Sahimi who underwent surgery at about 4pm.

Muhyiddin, who spent about 15 minutes outside the operation theatre, observed the surgery on the pilot.

"I feel sad over the accident involving Capt Sahimi. I had watched the operation that was carried out," he told reporters at the hospital.

- Bernama

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/161220>