

NEWS OF THE DAY

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13 killed in Chiang Mai bus crash

TRAGIC: 22 Malaysians on board; driver was fleeing from earlier accident

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At least 13 Malaysian tourists were killed after a bus believed to be steered by a rogue driver crashed in northern Thailand's Chiang Mai province yesterday.

The driver was fleeing from an earlier accident and ran off the road in Chiang Mai, reports said.

A Foreign Affairs Ministry statement confirmed the number of deaths and said the accident occurred at 11.30am (12.30pm Malaysian time).

The Bangkok Post website reported that the bus was on its way from Chiang Rai to Chiang Mai when the driver hit a pickup truck in the Mae Khajaen area. The tour agency said 22 Malaysians were on board the bus.



The bus driver, identified by *The Nation* as Somporn Bualuang, sped up to flee the chasing pickup truck.

He then lost control of his vehicle, and hit a car and electricity pole before careening off the road in Ban Pan Fan village of Pa Miang sub-district in Doi Saket, Thai police said.

Nine other Malaysian tourists, the driver and his assistant were injured and sent to hospital.

Malaysian ambassador to Thailand Datuk Nazirah Hussain said its officers would be deployed to Chiang Mai to assist with the situation.

"Two of our officers will travel to



Injured Malaysian tourists waiting for medical treatment after their tourist bus crashed in Doi Saket, Chiang Mai, yesterday. EPA pic

Chiang Mai," she told the *New Straits Times* in a text message yesterday.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry said the Malaysian embassy in Bangkok was working with Thai authorities to render consular assistance to the injured, as well as contacting the next of kin of the Malaysian victims.

It said those seeking information on the accident may call the em-

bassy's duty officer at +66-87-028-4659 (after working hours), or the mission at +66-2-629 6800 and +66-2-629 6831, as well as email mw-bangkok@kln.gov.my.

"The Foreign Affairs Ministry wishes to take this opportunity to extend its deepest condolences to the family and friends of those killed in this road accident," the statement said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak expressed his sadness over the tragedy.

"My condolences to the families of the victims," he said.

"The government will ensure all efforts will be made to repatriate the remains of the victims, while aid will be extended to the next of kin." Additional reporting by Hani Shamira Shahrudin