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Mahathir-KLIA

MORE LOCAL CONTRACTORS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN KLIA PROJECT, SAYS PM

SEPANG, Dec 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that more local contractors should take part in the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) construction project here.

He criticised some of them who were only interested in securing contracts under the project but not their implementation which were handed over to others.

"More locals should have taken part but unfortunately they themselves do not give priority to their participation in the project," he told reporters after visiting the site of phase one of the KLIA project costing RM9 billion.

Dr Mahathir said if this was their attitude, they would not gain much from the construction of the airport.

He was however happy with the capability of some local contractors in producing items like steel fabrication used in the KLIA project on their own.

Asked on the cost of construction of the KLIA, Dr Mahathir said he was informed that it was still within the estimated cost of RM9 billion, not including other privatised facilities.

"Eventually it will reach RM20 million because we must bear in mind that we have another terminal and three satellite buildings to construct. Therefore the cost will double the present cost, if not more.

"My original estimate of RM20 billion is not that far off," he said and in jest added: "Engineer Mahathir!"

When the first phase of the project is completed next year and the KLIA begins operations on Jan 1, 1998, the airport is expected to handle 25 million passengers and one million tonnes of cargo a year.

Dr Mahathir said that he was generally satisfied with the construction of the KLIA although there was a slight delay in some aspects.

Among them is the construction of the Malaysia Airlines campus and the implementation of the land handling system.

Dr Mahathir said that the construction of the highway and railway line to the KLIA was in the various stages of planning and implementation.

"I am confident that the KLIA can be operational on Jan 1, 1998 well before the Commonwealth Games because most will be ready by the third quarter or the end of next year," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the KLIA's first runway was expected to be ready by the end of the month while the taxiway had already been completed.

KLIA will have two runways which will be operational on the opening day. The KLIA is designed as an airport with four runways.

He said that although construction works were proceeding at a rapid pace, the quality aspect would not be compromised.

He said that although there were some problems as regards to quality, he was confident that the relevant authorities would take steps to overcome them and would not compromise on the matter.

Dr Mahathir, featured on the cover of the "Time" magazine, also commented on the article in the magazine which described many of those close to him as his "cronies."

"It looks like I have hundreds, in fact thousands of cronies who have secured all those contracts," he said in jest.

In the article, Dr Mahathir was also asked about his children's involvement in business.

"If working for the government and promoted, it will be because of me...if in the private sector and become successful, it will be said that it is because of me.

"Disallowed in the private sector, and also disallowed in the government...I think my children may well have to be manual labourers," he added in the same mood. -- BERNAMA

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