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All systems go: PM

Fadzil Ghazali

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who witnessed the first test-landing of a commercial aircraft at the new KL International Airport at Sepang yesterday, expressed confidence that the new airport will be completed by the first quarter of next year.

Speaking to reporters after the test-landing and visiting key areas of the new airport, Dr Mahathir said he is very satisfied with the progress of the construction of KLIA.

"It looks like we can finish everything by the first quarter of next year. The airport can operate by then," he added.

On the test-landing of the Malaysia Airlines 747 at the airport's Runway One, Dr Mahathir expressed satisfaction on the manner of the aircraft touched down and landed on the tarmac.

"Everything went off all right. The plane can land despite the slightly heavy haze.

"The landing was very good. The runway lights were working good also," he added.

The 747, designated Flight Number MH1509, marked Malaysia Airlines' inaugural test flight at the airport, which is set to be one of the largest airports in the region.

The aircraft, piloted by Captain Samsudin Zainol Abidin and assisted by Captain Arshad Abu Bakar, took off from the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport at 10am and touched down at Runway One at 10.30am.

It taxied along KLIA's taxiway A and F, and docked at gate A8 at the contact pier of the main terminal building of the new airport.

Among the passengers in the aircraft were Malaysia Airlines chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli and executive vice president Datuk Bashir Ahmad.

The test-landing was also witnessed by Cabinet ministers, senior government officials and KLIA staff.

The KLIA's basic trials involving the testing of the operational functionality, operating procedures and placement of trained personnel of the three main elements of airport operations, encompassing the flow of passengers, aircraft and baggage and cargo commence today.

The basic trials will continue until early December.

The advanced trials will start from December 15.

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