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Mahathir-Complex

COST OF BUILDING SPORT COMPLEX RISES BY RM300 MILLION

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 23 (Bernama) -- The cost of building the national sports complex in Bukit Jalil here has risen by almost RM300 million due to additional facilities, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The cost went up because we made changes all the time...there were many additions. There is an increase of almost RM300 million due to the enhancement," he told a news conference after inspecting the site of the project.

He said the changes included an increase in the seating capacity of the indoor stadium from 8,000 to 13,000 and the inclusion of a roof for the swimming arena.

Dr Mahathir said the government would bear the additional cost.

The complex includes a main stadium, an indoor stadium, separate stadiums for swimming, hockey, squash as well as a games village which will house some 6,000 athletes and sports officials during the Commonwealth Games next year.

Dr Mahathir said he was satisfied with the construction work and over the assurance given by the turnkey contractor, United Engineers (M) Bhd, that the RM2 billion project would be completed before Jan 1, 1998.

"This means nine months ahead of the contract period. I am very happy they gave this assurance. The progress so far appears to be smooth and I believe we can use all the facilities for trials and checking out," he said.

"Can't you see how happy I am...I am not crying. Usually if I am sad, I'll cry," he said jokingly when asked if he was happy with what he saw during this three-hour of the project site.

He was accompanied by Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Sukom Ninety Eight Berhad executive chairman General (Rtd) Tan Sri Hashim Ali and UEM chairman Tan Sri Radin Soenarno.

Dr Mahathir said the government was studying the possibility of privatising the management of the complex.

"We need professional management...this is not an ordinary sports facility than can be managed by some sports club or part timers but professionals with necessary experience and expertise," he said.

The Prime Minister said the complex was the single biggest sports infrastructure development after a similar project in South Korea built for the 1988 Olympic Games.

He said the 100,000-capacity main stadium in the complex would be among the biggest in Asia.

Dr Mahathir was given a briefing by UEM officials and it included on the landscaping work around the complex and the building of an LRT station there.

On the publicity campaign for the Commonwealth Games, Dr Mahathir said he was satisfied with the progress so far.

"It's moving...we have to build it up to crescendo. You can't just suddenly go 100 per cent than maintain it...it's difficult. Begin small than progress," he said.

The publicity campaign became an issue in June when Sukom was accused of not doing enough to promote the Games, especially abroad. It resulted in Hashim tendering his resignation but he withdraw it a day later.

On the possibility of the haze affecting Kuala Lumpur's staging of the

Games, Dr Mahathir said the government was discussing with Indonesia on the action to be taken to overcome the haze.

"We will do something..I'm sure there will be rain at the time or perhaps we will create artificial rain," he said.

He, however, ruled out the possibility of postponing the Games if the haze was strong at the time. -- BERNAMA

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