

15 SEP 1997

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MAHATHIR, CABINET MINISTERS WITNESS TEST LANDING AT KLIA

SEPANG, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- A Malaysia Airlines (MAS) Boeing 747 aircraft touched down at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) here this morning, marking the first landing at Asia's newest airport which began its basic trial today.

The test landing at Runway One of the RM9 billion airport was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Cabinet ministers.

There was a round of applause as the aircraft, piloted by Capt Samsudin Zainol Abidin, assisted by Capt Arshad Abu Bakar, touched down at 10.26am.

Joined by KLIA Berhad (KLIAB) staff, they waited eagerly for the plane to touch down amid the haze which enveloped almost the entire airport area.

MAS chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli and the Boeing's cabin crew, who were the only passengers on board, emerged from the aircraft moments after it docked at Gate A8 at the Contact Pier of the main terminal building.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said the landing went on smoothly.

"It went all right. The landing was very good," he said.

The Prime Minister said despite the slight haze, the pilot managed to land the plane without any problem.

Dr Mahathir said the lights on the runway also performed well.

The MH 1509 flight took off from the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah airport in Subang at 10.05am.

A proud Capt Samsudin said he did not have any problem landing the aircraft despite the haze.

In conjunction with the landing, Dr Mahathir planted a specimen of the "Merawan Siput Jantan" (*Hopea Odorata*) at the central hub of the Satellite Terminal building which has been landscaped to depict a tropical forest.

Meanwhile, KLIA Berhad said in a statement today that the 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 passenger, aircraft and baggage and cargo handling would start tomorrow.

"The basic trials will continue until early December when the advanced trials will commence beginning Dec 15, 1997," the statement said.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said on Aug 14 that the on-schedule installation of the KLIA's Total Airport Management System (TAMS) allows the airport to conduct basic trials as planned today.

TAMS is a sophisticated data-sourcing and processing system that interfaces with and integrates the various electronic sub-systems within the KLIA, thus creating a single point for the entire airport operations and management.

The system interfaces with and intergrates 29 airport sub-systems for crisis control, flight information display, gate collection, card access, meteorological, air traffic management and baggage handling.

Dr Ling said the first trial run would be followed by advance trials on Dec 15.

Located on a 10,000-hectare site, some 50km south of Kuala Lumpur, the KLIA will be able to accommodate 25 million passengers yearly upon its opening day and up to 60 million by the year 2020.

It will have two main runways each measuring 4,000 metres by 60 metres.

Two car parks at the airport would have a total of 12,600 bays and of these 6,300 bays would be for short duration parking.

The KLIA will have an "Airport in the Forest" and "Forest in the Airport" effect with landscapes surrounding the terminal and satellite area.

Dr Mahathir and the Cabinet ministers later observed the progress of works at the airport which is expected to start commercial operations during the first quarter of next year. -- BERNAMA

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