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Test landing of first plane at KLIA on Sept 15

SEPANG, Tues. - A test-landing of a large commercial aeroplane at the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport will be conducted on Sept 15 although the airport's opening has been pushed back to the first quarter of next year.

The landing of the Malaysia Airlines' Boeing 747 is expected to be witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who said this today, also confirmed that the opening of the KLIA, originally scheduled for Jan 1 next year, had been delayed as the Government wanted to ensure that all its systems were functioning accordingly.

He said although the airport would be ready technically by Sept 15 and its total airport management system would be in place by Dec 15, the Government had been advised by experts to allow for a few months of testing and monitoring of the various systems.

"Actually, the airport can start operating on Jan 1 as scheduled but this has been deferred to some time in the first quarter of next year as we want to ensure everything is in order," he told reporters after chairing a Cabinet Committee meeting on KLIA and a visit to the site this morning.

Anwar said the experts were of the opinion that it would be best to have at least a three-month trial period to test and monitor the efficiency of all systems involved in aircraft landing, baggage handling, catering and security.

Anwar said Malaysia Airports Berhad and MAS had been asked to co-ordinate their operations for the opening of the airport next year.

This would also mark the official transfer of operations from the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang to KLIA.

Anwar said he was happy the construction schedules had been adhered to.

"Except for a few minor hitches in the management and technical aspects, there are no major problems affecting the construction or the installation of systems at the airport."

Last month, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said that the opening of the airport, scheduled for Jan 1, had been delayed to "anytime within the first three months of next year".

However, Dr Ling stated that work on the project proper was still on schedule and there was no delay in the construction.

Commenting on the delay, Dr Mahathir said it was not critical and that the airport would still be ready in time for the Commonwealth Games.

Among those who accompanied Anwar were Dr Ling, Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Abu Zahar Ujang, Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad and Finance Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Clifford Herbert.

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