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Committee to decide date for official opening of KLIA

Asiah Bujang

THE Transport Ministry's special committee will determine the exact date for the official opening ceremony of the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the RM9 billion airport, to be opened by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, was originally scheduled to begin operation in June but this has been deferred due to reasons such as the recent forest fires near the airport.

"The committee will organise the ceremonial arrangement for the official opening," he told reporters after the weekly Cabinet meeting at his office in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The committee comprises KL International Airport Bhd (KLIAB), Malaysia Airports Bhd, the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) and the ministry's top officials.

Dr Ling said the committee welcomes interested parties' contribution towards the smooth running of the opening ceremony.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to deliver the keynote address at the ceremony.

Bername reports: A group of haj pilgrims became the first passengers to land at the KLIA when the Transmile Air aircraft bringing them back from Mecca touched down at the airport at 8.40am yesterday.

They were greeted on arrival by Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Mohamed Ali Rustam, Malaysia Airports Bhd chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail and KLIAB chairman Tan Sri Clifford Herbert.

Most of the passengers, who are from Kelantan, later continued their journey on another aircraft to Kota Baru.

Ali said the handling of the passengers proceeded smoothly, showing that the KLIA is ready for full operation as scheduled next month.

"The time taken for immigration checks was fast and on par with that of the best airport in the world," he added.

The commander of the flight, Captain Malchow Kenneth, said his first landing at the KLIA was very smooth.

"Its was a smooth landing. I was guided well by the tower and had no problem at all adjusting to the new airport," said the captain, who has 32 years flying experience and has landed at almost all the international airports in the world.

He said the KLIA is as good as other well-known airports in the world, including those in New York, Atlanta and Europe.

"I am very very impressed with the terminal which I must say is the best in the region," he said, adding that he was looking forward to making more landings at the KLIA.

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