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For sporting excellence (HL)

Randhir Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil, the venue of the 16th Commonwealth Games, was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a glittering ceremony tonight.

Dr Mahathir also announced the names of the main stadium and six other venues of the Games. The main stadium will be known as Stadium Nasional.

The indoor stadium will be called Stadium Putra in memory of the country's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra. He also named a hill in the Sports Complex as Bukit Komanwel (Commonwealth Hill).

Dr Mahathir also named two other Games venues located at Bukit Kiara - Juara Stadium for netball and the National Lawn Bowls Centre.

In his speech, the Prime Minister said the opening of the sports complex was not just to ensure the success of the Games, but to turn it into a symbol of sports excellence.

Dr Mahathir said investments in sports would not go to waste because it helped the people maintain fitness, both physical and mental.

In addition, investment and development in sports would bring big returns to the nation, he said.

"The active participation of the people in all sports activities will lead to the building up of the spirit of competition, commitment and dedication among them. Sports also inculcates in us strong discipline and other positive values."

The event was witnessed by a large crowd, including Ministers, members of the diplomatic corps and Commonwealth Games Federation president Michael Fennell.

To mark the opening of the stadium, Dr Mahathir lit the cauldron using a torch he received from bowler Shalin Zulkilfi.

The two-hour ceremony was telecast live by RTM.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir launched System 1 of the Sistem Transit Aliran Ringan (STAR) which links the city and the sports complex.

The Prime Minister took a 24-minute ride on the LRT from the Jalan Sultan Ismail station in the city to its RM23 million Bukit Jalil station, a distance of 12km.

The main stadium, indoor stadium and swimming complex cost RM800 million and were built by United Engineers Malaysia.

In conjunction with the opening, an hour-long concert featuring artistes such as Ning Baizura, M. Nasir, Ziana Zain, Erra Fazira and Indian singer Sudesh Boshle was held.

The celebrations started as early as 10am with a carnival featuring a go-kart race, kite-flying competition and several Rakan Muda events.

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