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`Games facilities can be used for other events'

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MALAYSIA'S preparations for the 16th Commonwealth Games will not go to waste as the facilities can be used for other events in the future, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Preparations which included projects like the KL International Airport, roads, stadiums, and the International Broadcast Centre (IBC) cost only "one-fifth of the cost of building Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport", he said when opening the RM68 million IBC in Kuala Lumpur.

"We spent less than US\$5 billion (US\$1 = RM4.25) but it is still quite big for a small country like Malaysia. However, we have the ability to do so.

"We are able to spend money to purchase all the equipment and facilities needed as we do not want to disappoint anybody," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Government is prepared to be criticised if there are mistakes in the organising of the event.

Likewise, he added, if efforts undertaken are good and successful it should be appreciated.

"We have the ability and we will improve this ... we will undertake rehearsals and if need be, many many times so that we can learn from our mistakes," he said.

On the IBC, Dr Mahathir said the decision to set up the broadcasting centre was made after the country hosted the South-East Asian Games in 1989.

The cost to furnish the IBC with sophisticated equipment is minimal.

"We want to ensure that we have the best facilities available for the Games. We also want to be sure as organiser of the Games that it will be carried out in a systematic and orderly manner."

The IBC project was implemented on a fast-track basis from October 1995 after Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) was appointed as the host broadcaster for the Commonwealth Games.

RTM will be responsible for providing broadcast services to the rights holders on behalf of the organising committee.

There are four local and 15 client broadcast stations holding the rights to air Sukom 98 Games for an audience of 50 million people worldwide.

About 2,000 reporters and technicians are expected to cover the Games from September 11 to 21.

Information Minister Datuk Mohamad Rahmat said that RTM will ensure comprehensive coverage during the Games, with more than 80 per cent of airtime on TV1 and 76 per cent on TV2.

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