

24 AUG 1998

MAHATHIR-FACILITIES

GAMES FACILITIES NOT A WASTE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says that Malaysia's preparation for the 16th Commonwealth Games or "Kuala Lumpur 98" is not a waste as the facilities can be used for other events in the future.

He said although some have perceived the preparations which included projects like the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at Sepang, roads, stadia, and the International Broadcast Centre as a waste, in actual fact they cost only one-fifth of the cost of building Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport.

Opening the RM68 million IBC here today, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has spent less than US\$5 billion to prepare for the games.

Although the expenditure for the preparation for the games is quite big for a small country like Malaysia, the country has the ability to do so, he said.

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

As for the IBC, he said the government decided on such a centre after the South-East Asia games which Malaysia hosted in 1989.

From that experience, Malaysia has realised the need for an international broadcasting centre to host international events, Dr Mahathir said.

He said he believed that international broadcasting agencies would use the IBC facilities and that they would be satisfied with the facilities although Malaysia has not hosted any major sporting events as big as the Commonwealth Games.

The Prime Minister said that a rehearsal should be held to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

"There were some problems in the preparations for the games and everything cannot be 100 percent successful" he said.

He also said that Malaysia was open to constructive criticism and welcomes appreciation for doing a good job.

The IBC is the nerve centre for the world-wide television transmission of "Kuala Lumpur '98" here next month.

Radio dan Televisyen Malaysia (RTM), the host broadcaster for the Games also known as Kuala Lumpur '98, has set up the centre which is located within its compound, Angkasapuri.

The facility is equipped with the latest facilities. Coverage of the Commonwealth Games is expected to reach about 500 million viewers throughout the world.

Fifteen international broadcasters and four local stations will be using the IBC for the Games.

Among them are British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Channel 9 of Australia, TV New Zealand, TV South Africa as well as television stations from Brunei, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Some 2,000 television reporters, technicians and cameramen are expected to cover the games from Sept 11-21.-- BERNAMA

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