

24 AUG 1998

Mahathir-Facilities

GAMES FACILITIES NOT A WASTE, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia's preparations for Kuala Lumpur 98 will not be a waste as the facilities can be used for other events in the future.

He said that although some perceived the preparations which included projects like the KL International Airport, 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, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia spent less than US\$5 billion to prepare for Kuala Lumpur 98.

Although the expenditure for the preparations for Kuala Lumpur 98 was 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 realised the need for an international broadcasting centre when hosting 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 Kuala Lumpur 98.

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 per cent 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 the Games here next month.

Radio dan Televisyen Malaysia (RTM), the host broadcaster for 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 Kuala Lumpur 98 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 the 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 Kuala Lumpur 98 from Sept 11-21.

-- BERNAMA

AD/MAM MR/RM