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Dr M: Funds for Games facilities well spent

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Money spent on facilities for the 16th Commonwealth Games is not a waste especially when they will also be used for future events, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir said: "We spent less than US\$5 billion (RM21 billion) ... they are not meant for just one event, but for future use."

In fact, the combined cost of the so-called mega projects like the KL International Airport, roads, stadia and other facilities such as the International Broadcast Centre was just a quarter of the cost to build Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport, Dr Mahathir said in his speech at the opening of the RM68-million IBC in Angkasapuri.

He added that IBC, a specialised centre equipped with sophisticated broadcasting and transmission equipment reflective of today's Information Technology development, would allow users to cover the Games comprehensively.

In the past, such as when hosting the Sea Games, temporary centres had to be set up for international broadcasting agencies. Dr Mahathir said: "We realise that we need an international broadcast centre if we want to host international events.

"Now we have come up with such a centre at a cost which is rather small, but one which is equipped with all the latest and sophisticated equipment."

Apart from local TV stations, the IBC will be used by 15 foreign client broadcasters or rights holders. They include British Broadcasting Corporation (TV and radio); ABC (Radio Australia); Canadian Broadcasting Corp (radio and TV); South African Broadcasting Corporation (Topspots) and TV New Zealand.

The IBC is the nerve centre for all broadcasting operations during the Games.

Client broadcasters will rent space to set up their operations. All the audio video signals from the various venues will be transmitted to the centre for onward transmission to the clients who will provide their own commentaries.

Facilities at the IBC include a medical centre, distribution centres for signals, telecoms and audio, and dubbing and editing rooms.

The Games will be followed by about 500 million radio listeners and television viewers worldwide. Some 2,000 TV reporters, technicians and cameramen are expected to cover the Games from Sept 11-21.

Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said apart from TV and radio broadcasts, there will be radio broadcasts on the Internet in four languages - Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin and Tamil.

He said during the Games, 80 of TV1 broadcast and 76 per cent of TV2 broadcast would be devoted to sports.

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