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Commonwealth-Mahathir

KL 98 GAMES FACILITIES A `MAHATHIR MIRACLE`

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, June 17 (Bernama) -- A leading Australian newspaper has described the Commonwealth Games operations in Kuala Lumpur as a "Mahathir miracle".

Writing in `The Age` newspaper after a five-day visit to Malaysia to inspect the Games stadiums and village, its features writer Louise Evans said: "Down on the ground, migrant labour is putting the finishing touches to Prime Minister Mahathir's miracle."

Evans said because of the fall in local currency "it's not been easy" but she has returned to Melbourne thoroughly impressed with what she saw with regard to the preparation for the Games and the facilities for visiting nations.

"The jewel in the crown, the 100,000-seat main stadium -- which is bigger than Atlanta's Olympic stadium and as majestic as Barcelona's -- is ready to welcome the Commonwealth and ...," she said.

"A massive building boom has taken the city's accommodation capacity from 12,000 to 25,000 rooms for the predicted horde of 50,000 visitors."

"The lifeblood of any capital, the taxi drivers, chatter excitedly about their impending windfall for the first Games staged in Asia.

"Slow ticket sales remain a problem, but critics of the heat, 90 per cent humidity and threatened haze from annual burning in neighbouring Indonesia may as well keep their counsel.

"Nothing is going to stop the King of Malaysia, instead of the Queen of England, from saying `Let the Games begin` on September 11.

"Too much has been invested. Too much is at stake, both politically and financially, to halt what is being touted as Malaysia's sporting miracle."

Evans said that for the first time in the history of the Games, the event had been fully backed by the host government rather than a private company, "hence the political will".

"I did not hear one word of public dissent ... the overriding feeling was one of immense pride and hope," the article said.

-- BERNAMA

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