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Majestic opening for Commonwealth Games

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DESPITE facing economic problems, Malaysia is now proudly the first Asian country to host the Commonwealth Games, the world's second largest sports gathering after the Olympics.

The 16th Commonwealth Games was declared open by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar last night, watched by almost 100,000 people at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur.

The King struck a traditional gong three times to raise the curtain on the Games, the last and hopefully the best to be held for this century. The next Commonwealth Games will be hosted by Manchester in the UK in the year 2002.

A 16-cannon salute reverberated around the stadium when the King declared the Games open. In the royal box were the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah and Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) president Prince Edward, who also represented his mother, Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen, who is the head of the Commonwealth, will close the Games at the same venue on September 21.

Others dignitaries present at the opening were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, CGF chairman Michael Fennell of Jamaica, International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch and Datuk Bandar Kuala Lumpur Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Shariff.

Also gracing the occasion were Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei and Fijian Prime Minister General Sitiveni Rabuka.

* See also p3.

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