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PM: KLIA to be opened as scheduled

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SEPANG, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Kuala Lumpur International Airport would be officially opened as scheduled on June 27 and critics who said it was too costly have been proven wrong.

Speaking after a three-hour visit to KLIA, Dr Mahathir said the airport was built within a record time of four years at a cost of only RM9 billion.

"Other airports which are much smaller cost more than US\$9 billion (RM36 billion)."

He also congratulated the Kuala Lumpur International Airport Bhd, the developer of the airport.

"When we wanted to build the airport, many said it would be too costly. But if we did not go ahead and were forced to do it later or even now, we would not be able to build it at RM9 billion.

"We made the decision to build the airport at the right time. At the time the ringgit was strong, RM9 billion was only about US\$4 billion then.

"But now the RM9 billion is worth only some US\$2 billion," Dr Mahathir said, adding that even the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang cost more than RM20 billion.

Asked whether the low cost has affected the construction quality, Dr Mahathir said: "There is no compromise on quality. You can see for yourself that the quality is very good, the finishing is very good, the construction work is good, and the designs are very innovative and the furniture is of very good quality. Practically everything is made locally and of high quality."

Dr Mahathir said KLIAB deserved praise as it required considerable management skills to handle 25,000 workers and to integrate 300 contracts.

"It has shown good progress, its construction is of high quality and indeed its Total Airport Management System appears to be without hitches," he said.

Dr Mahathir said when he privately toured the KLIA several weeks ago, he was quite apprehensive whether it could be completed on schedule.

"But after today's inspection, I am very happy with the progress and the quality of the construction."

To a question on whether the second phase of the project would be delayed due to the current economic problems, Dr Mahathir said even if there was a delay, it would not be for long.

Dr Mahathir said it would be pointless to build another terminal if the number of users was small.

According to plans, the second phase of the development envisages facilities which will increase the airport's capacity to accommodate 35 million passengers by 2008 while the third phase will cater for 45 million passengers by 2012.

The first phase can accommodate 25 million passengers.

Located about 50 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur, the state-of-the-art airport is a four-phased project designed to cater for the passenger and air cargo demands of Malaysia's major international gateway for the next century.

On complaints that the signages are too small and unreadable, Dr Mahathir said they would be remedied, if there was a need to do so.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar is scheduled to open the KLIA

on June 27. It would be fully operational three days later.
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