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PM attends final rehearsal for Games opening

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad witnessed the final full dress rehearsal for the opening ceremony of the 16th Commonwealth Games at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur, last night.

The National Stadium is the venue for the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as the track and field events.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and several ministers and dignitaries. The stadium, which can accommodate some 100,000 spectators, was almost full.

Among those present were Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik and Sukom Ninety-Eight Bhd chairman Jeneral (Rtd) Tan Sri Hashim Ali.

Among the highlights of the four-hour extravaganza were a colourful welcoming presentation by dancers who swayed to traditional Malay numbers and the marching-in of the 70 participating Commonwealth members.

Also making their presence felt during the rehearsal were the 5,000 people who made up the "human graphics" using coloured cards to depict the various facets of the Games, including flags of participating countries.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar will open the Games tomorrow.

About 5,000 athletes and officials will take part in the Games, billed as the grandest ever in the series. Commonwealth head Queen Elizabeth II will grace the closing ceremony on September 21.

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