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PM satisfied with overall performance of KL Games

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday paid tribute to athletes and officials as well as Malaysians who have given their full support to ensure the success of the 16th Commonwealth Games which will come to an end today.

Satisfied with the overall performance of the Games, billed to be the world's second largest sports gathering, Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian athletes have defied all odds to do well.

"They (Malaysian athletes) have done extremely well ... I did not expect them to win that many medals, especially golds.

"Initially, I was rather pessimistic ... I thought we would have enough problem being the host and we would not be able to win any medal but they have done well," he told newsmen after visiting the main press centre of the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The Kuala Lumpur Games has seen more than 5,000 athletes from 70 participating countries and territories participating in various events held in Kuala Lumpur, Shah Alam and Langkawi since September 11.

"Somebody told me that they regret that it (the Games) was coming to an end tomorrow (today). They thought it should go on forever. Everybody seems to be enjoying themselves.

"I think the Games has been going on very well, much better than I expected. I am happy with the progress of the Games and hope nothing happens in the one more day to go. I hope everybody will go back happy," he added.

On whether the Government will declare a public holiday for the success, Dr Mahathir said: "I am seriously thinking about it. I don't know when is the ideal time ..."

On whether the dismissal of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on September 2 had caused any disruption to the Games, Dr Mahathir said he considered it "a minor distraction".

"I think we are more focused on the Games. We are very happy. We are quite relaxed, we are not unduly worried of anything.

"As you would notice, the people here seemed to be enjoying themselves, it doesn't look like they have any political problem. In fact, somebody suggested that I should hold elections now as I will win hands down," he added.

Bernama reports: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II arrived in Kuala Lumpur yesterday for a four-day state visit.

The queen was accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Robin Cook.

This is the queen's first visit to Malaysia since 1989 when Kuala Lumpur hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

The royal couple was met on arrival at the Bunga Raya complex of KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, near here, by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is the minister-in-attendance, and Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek, who is the minister-in-attendance for the Duke of Edinburgh.

They are the first users of the newly-completed RM80 million VVIP complex.

Meanwhile, the queen attended a church service at the St Mary's Anglican Cathedral at Jalan Raja, in Kuala Lumpur.

After the 45-minute service, the queen, who was accompanied by the Duke

of Edinburgh, met members of the congregation and Sunday School, who sang hymns during the mass.

The royal couple then adjourned to Carcosa Seri Negara where they met Commonwealth Games gold medallists.

A welcoming ceremony will be held for the queen at Parliament Square today morning.

She will meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad before touring the International Zone and the National Stadium at the National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil, where she will officially close the Games.

The queen is also scheduled to open an exhibition at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre and visit a British/Malaysian education establishment, a centre for disadvantaged children and a centre for blind people.

The Duke of Edinburgh will have separate engagements including a meeting with key players in Malaysia's financial services sector and a visit to Cyberjaya for a briefing on the Multimedia Super Corridor.