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PM heaps praise on KLIA Bhd's remarkable achievement

PETALING JAYA, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today praised KLIA Berhad, the developer of the KL International Airport, for its efforts which led to the one-year-old airport being named as the third best in the world for business passenger satisfaction.

The Prime Minister said this was a remarkable achievement by a developing country in such a short space of time. The KL International Airport celebrated its first anniversary on June 27.

"KLIA Berhad has also been nominated for excellence in engineering work ... I would like to congratulate KLIA for receiving these recognitions which I think it rightly deserves," he said.

He said this in his speech at the opening of the Ninth Airport Council International Pacific Regional Assembly and Conference.

The ranking was made by the International Air Transport Association Global Airport Monitor in its April report.

KL International Airport was rated behind Helsinki and Singapore by business travellers.

(The airport emerged first for overall business passenger satisfaction for airports in the 15 to 25 million passengers per annum category.)

The Prime Minister said he was glad to note that local companies such as KLIA Berhad, Sapura and IT-solution providers, XY-Base and Malaysia Airports Berhad, have also begun offering their skills and experiences in developing and managing airports abroad.

He also congratulated KLIA Berhad for being able to move from the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang to the present site without causing prolonged inconveniences.

Although there were hitches in the first two weeks, these were overcome much sooner than usual.

"What has not been generally noticed is the move in 24 hours of the operations from the old airport in Subang to KLIA without interrupting flights.

"Considering the number of systems and the hardware, the staff and all else, this is quite a feat," he said adding that the success in the development of the KLIA went beyond the physical construction of the airport.

Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said, was relatively young in the provision of air transport and aviation services.

Since civil aviation began in the early forties, the sector had grown faster than had been expected.

He said since the late eighties, the country embarked on a programme of airport infrastructure development, planned to cater for the accelerated pace of economic growth.

"Much forward planning is essential as we do not want to be caught again with an airport that is inadequate and yet is unable to expand," he said.

He said the SAAS airport opened in 1964 with a projected capacity of 400,000 passengers per annum but at the time the main operations were moved to KLIA, the SAAS was handling 17 million passengers.

"If one has to build a new airport, it must be planned to cater for expansion over the next hundred years if not more," he said.

Dr Mahathir said with significant changes taking place, what determined its success was the efficient delivery of services by operators to the various airport users.

The airport was no longer a space for landing, boarding and taking off only.

"More and more airports are now being transformed and upgraded to provide equally high levels of service and comfort.

"Probably, the time has come for airports to adopt the hotel star classification; five-star, four-star, three-star and so on," Dr Mahathir said.

He said focus on ways to improve the quality of service should be the rule of the game for future airports.

Also present were Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Association of Asia Pacific Airlines director-general Richard Stirland.

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