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Sultan Mahmud Airport to get RM300 million facelift

KUALA TERENGGANU, Fri. - The Sultan Mahmud Airport here will become a major airport on the east coast after it has been upgraded at an estimated cost of about RM300 million, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the new-look airport would allow for more landings as well as bigger aircraft such as the Boeing 747. It would also help to attract more investment into Terengganu, Pahang and Kelantan.

"If the Government had no money, we would not be able to carry out the expansion project.

"But we have the money because we are able to manage the country's funds. We would not be able to manage such funds if we did not have a strong Government and the close co-operation of civil service officers.

"They were efficient in not only managing the funds but also avoiding wasteful practices," he said at the ground-breaking for the expansion of the airport.

The project includes the construction of a bigger terminal building, longer runway, wider taxiway and bigger aircraft parking apron.

It also involves the construction of two aerobridges, two visual dockings and upgrading landing equipment as well as building a larger car park with 400 bays.

The old control tower would also be demolished and be replaced with a spanking new, state-of-the-art facility.

However, Dr Mahathir said there were those who said civil servants were anti-government.

"Yes, there are but less than one per cent of the total. The majority, however, did not try to cheat the Government or try to sabotage government programmes," he said while thanking civil servants for the dedication and co-operation.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said the project would become a catalyst for economic and social development on the east coast.

Asked if the private sector would come in, he said: "Given half a chance, the private sector would come in because they like to take part in development projects".

He added that they were even willing to take over all the development projects but the Government had to be sensitive about the costs involved so as not to burden the public.

"So, if we want to give projects to the private sector, we have to subsidise the project, but not the company.

"This is to reduce the burden of having to pay high toll rates, for example, and to allow the company to recover from their investment," he added.

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