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The road to having world's best airport

Selvaraj T. Packiam

WHEN the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport was taking shape in Sepang, Malaysia Airports Bhd managing director Datuk Khairuddin Ibrahim came up with a superb idea: to send old and young "tigers" of Malaysia Airports from every division (electrical, civil engineering, safety, bay allocation, etc) to Sepang.

They were to assist in the planning and building of the required facilities so that we could serve the customers well when the airport started operations in 1998.

The main goal of Malaysia Airports is to provide a world class airport service.

When the Malaysia Airports staff were sent out, there were no proper roads to get to the worksite. But with full spirit and dedication they persisted.

Some came down with dengue fever while others met with accidents on the way to work.

Yet they never quit and carried out the mission they were entrusted with.

There was one incident in which a member of the Malaysia Airports staff met with an accident and broke his leg. He was given three months' medical leave but he came to work with a walking stick to complete his project.

The staff brought along instant noodles and biscuits for lunch because the nearest restaurant was 10 kilometres away.

They had to stay back for meetings after work to submit reports to the project manager.

Most of them would return home very late after work. Yet they pressed on to finish their respective jobs.

Our managing director and other top Malaysia Airports officials would come over to Sepang frequently to give encouragement to their staff and oversee the project. We should congratulate the staff for a job well done.

During the time the airport was being built and after it was opened, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Malaysia Airports chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail came to the airport frequently to check on its progress and to make sure that every sen spent on the airport was worth it.

I hope the foreign media will stop making negative reports on our current political situation. The foreign media tends to make a mountain out of a molehill. This can affect the country's image and discourage tourists from coming to our country.

Such negative reports affect domestic flights too, and business at the duty-free shops and restaurants at the airport suffers.

I will be retiring in April after 34 years' of service but will continue to give my best to the airport as a token of my appreciation and dedication

I hope we will achieve our goal of having the best airport in the world. We should work hand in hand to create a good first impression of our country.

After all, the airport is the gateway and window to Malaysia. Malaysia Boleh.