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MAS passes the Y2K test

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SEPANG, Sat. - Malaysia Airlines reported today its operations were running smoothly as it ushered in the new millennium.

Chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli, who was at the airlines' flight management centre at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, said none of the airline's systems and operations worldwide encountered glitches.

"I am pleased to announce that at this point, we have not received any reports of incidents related to the Y2K bug. We do not view the situation as a problem and are operating as normal," he said last night.

Tajuddin said the money used to overcome the Y2K bug was "very well spent" as it assured its passengers, aircraft and crew of the fullest safety during the period.

Malaysia Airlines had cancelled 90 flights, including 36 international ones, for the rollover but 58 flights continued to be made during the period.

Tajuddin said the cancellations were unavoidable as there was low demand. A testament to this was flight MH002 which departed for London tonight - Malaysia Airline's most popular route - carried only 43 passengers.

The sign of passengers not travelling during the rollover was clearly evident at the KLIA as the normally busy airport was quiet and deserted.

Tajudin flew on one of the airline's flights out of KLIA - MH1434 to Penang at 7.30am. He returned to KLIA a couple of hours later.

Tajudin, together with the top brass of the airline, spent several hours just before midnight to inspect the operations at the flight management centre, where a special operations team had been assembled with 1,000 staff and volunteers looking over every aspect of the airline's operations.

He said even if all conventional communications failed, the crew would still be able to communicate with ground control via the passenger satellite telephones.

Tajudin even surprised the flight crew on one of the inbound flights, MH093 from Tokyo, when he contacted them via the HF radio as the Boeing 747-400 aircraft was flying over Manila to wish them a happy new year. So surprised were the pilots that when Tajudin indentified himself, the commander of the aircraft, Capt Jalil Mat Dom, who seemed sceptical of whom he was speaking to answered: "If you're Tajudin, I am Mahathir!" (Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad). Tajudin was amused.

Jalil told reporters on arrival that the flight from Narita Airport was smooth, and the crew encountered no problems en route.

"When we took off from Narita, we were the only aircraft flying over the Japanese airspace," he said, indicating the low traffic during the period due to cancellations.

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