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Old Subang airport to make way for new convention centre

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THE former Terminal One building of the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang will be demolished to make way for the construction of a RM1 billion National Exhibition and Convention Centre (NECC).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who officiated the soft-launching of the NECC project yesterday, said the new convention centre will attract tourists into the country.

"It will also be equipped with direct access to a Boeing 747-runway of its own which is not available in many countries," he said at the launching in Subang.

The NECC, which will be developed and managed by Malaysia Airports Bhd at an estimated cost of RM1 billion, is due for completion in the third quarter of 2002.

Speaking to newsmen later, Malaysia Airport executive chairman Tan Sri Basir Ismail said the company is expected to spend some RM1 billion for the project.

"We will try to work out according to the budget but we will try to reduce the cost as we can," he said, in response to the remarks by the Prime Minister that Malaysia Airports should try to reduce the cost of the project which he considered another one of the mega projects.

To be equipped with the latest state-of-the-art facilities, the NECC will have 100,000 sq metres of exhibition space and could cater for conventions up to 20,000 delegates.

There will also be an auction centre for Asia-Pacific region adjacent to this facility. The auction centre will have the facility for 747 aircraft to be parked either as an auction item or bringing other items for auction.

Basir said the development of NECC provides the opportunity to expand the company's revenue base and maximise shareholder value by increasing passenger and cargo traffic into the country, as well as creating new economic opportunities in tourism and travel.

"Studies have shown that exhibitions and conventions have an eight time multiplier effect on the economy. The strong correlation between a country's gross domestic product and passenger traffic means that any effort to increase growth of the economy will undoubtedly increase passenger traffic into the country," he said.

The NECC also features a convention centre, connected to the main exhibition hall via a skywalk and a series of moving pavements.

Plans for the upgrading of the public transportation system connecting to downtown Kuala Lumpur are also in the pipeline, including plans to extend the light rail transit and rail link systems to the NECC.

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