

Project launched in high-tech ceremony

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. The Kuala Lumpur City Air Terminal and KLIA Ekspres were launched tonight in a high-tech ceremony reflecting the modern services now available to air passengers.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad kicked off events by launching the terminal's check-in counters as soon as he arrived at KL CAT accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The event had grand touches like a dazzling fireworks display, flashing graphics on the walls and a fiery violin solo.

A large white balloon was released to signify the launch and a "flying" entrance made by a stuntwoman dressed in silver to the stage.

She passed a cellular telephone to Dr Mahathir, who sent a SMS message out to mobile phone users nationwide.

The message read: "The KL

City Air Terminal and KLIA Ekspres are now officially launched."

The Prime Minister also sent off the first batch of 28 passengers the number being significant as ERL had promised the ride to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport would take only 28 minutes.

Among the passengers were national badminton players Choong Tan Fook, Chan Chong Ming, Chew Choon Eng and Lee Wan Wah — headed for a flight to Penang.

The train arrived in just 26 minutes and the passengers had a video conferencing session with Dr Mahathir before heading off to their destinations. The majority were going to European countries.

The first thing Dr Mahathir said to the passengers was "are you sure you are there?", which drew laughter from the crowd.

Syed Mohd Razif, who was taking a flight to France, assured him: "Yes, we are really here. I enjoyed the ride and was surprised by the speed."

Dr Mahathir wished the passengers "bon voyage" before moving on to officially launch the KL CAT and KL Ekspres.

Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd executive chairman Datuk Mohd Nadzmi Mohd Salleh said KL CAT would open its doors to the public at 8am tomorrow, and the KLIA Ekspres would receive its first paying passenger.

Malaysia Airlines will open six of the check-in counters to check in both passengers and their baggage. Check-in will be available later for other airlines. Passengers have to check-in at least two hours before their flight.

He said KLIA Ekspres' first commercial service tomorrow would run from Sam to the next day at 1am. Subsequently, the service will operate daily from 4.30am to 1am the following day, a 20-hour service daily.

Retail outlets at the KL CAT are almost complete. There will be 41 outlets — 23 at the departure hall and 18 at the arrival hall. To date, eight have opened.