

PM: We have gained great skills

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By STEPHEN THEN

BINTULU: Malaysian builders and engineers have reached a stage where they can become major players in the global arena, particularly in the construction of international airports, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Their expertise and knowledge, especially in the construction of mega projects like airport complexes, bridges and roads could be used as an avenue to rake in handsome

financial returns for the country, the Prime Minister said.

"We Malaysians have already developed great skills in the construction industry, even in the building of very sophisticated structures with unique designs.

"Previously, Malaysia needed the help of Europeans, Japanese and Korean contractors to handle all the big projects. Now, we can handle all our projects. Just look at our success in Putrajaya.

"It is time we export these

skills to compete with the developed countries," he said when opening the new RM385mil Bintulu Airport.

He congratulated the airport's developer, Global Upline, and the state authorities for their role in building the airport ahead of schedule.

The new airport with a 2.75km runway will replace the one in the middle of the town from March. The old airport has been operating since 1972.