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KLIA-FUTURE

KLIA BUILT TO CATER TO FUTURE NEEDS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 29 (Bernama) -- The Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) which replaced the Subang Airport as the international airstrip, was built to cater to future demand, the former prime minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Built in 1964, he said the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International in Subang, was designed to handle 400,000 passengers per year only.

The growth in air travel was so rapid that by the year 1998 Subang Airport was handling 14 million with only one runway, he said.

"It is obvious that people who had designed Subang Airport did not imagine the potential growth in people travelling by air," he said.

The idea then was to build another bigger international airport to avoid facing the same problem in 20 or 30 years down the road, he said.

Operational on June 30, 1998, KLIA, which cost a whopping RM9 billion, is one of the most modern and sophisticated airports in the Asia-Pacific region.

KLIA, he said was designed to handle 120 million passengers per annum.

"(So), we built a small KLIA and by the time the number of passengers increased (to 120 million), I will be dead and gone, But I have to think of people who will be around for 30 years from now," said Dr Mahathir.

He said this when asked on his "Thinking" behind KLIA during a question and answer session after delivering a keynote address entitled: "The Thinking of a Thinker." The seminar was organised by the International Islamic University on Thinking.

He said the old airport was unable to grow due limited capacity and space.

Citing the Heathrow airport in London, he said it took the authorities 14 years to build the fifth terminal because there were objections from people living close to the airport, "they don't want to hear aircraft noise but when they want to travel they like to be near the airport."

The KLIA was built after taking all those into consideration.

As at end 2004, KLIA was already handling 21 million passengers and five years down the road it would be handling 25 million passengers.

If KLIA was designed for only 25 million passengers, then 10 years from now it would face the same problem like the old Subang Airport, he said.

"Five years down the road when KLIA is to handle 25 million passengers, one main terminal, one satellite and two runways would not be enough.

"You have to add another satellite. In our plan, we have four satellites and five runways so that we can handle 120 million passengers," he said.

He cited that cities built in Europe were constructed to future needs.

"They wanted the buildings to last for 100, 200 and 300 years. So, we build today not only for us but also for future generation," he said.

"Same goes to the Prime Minister's house in Putrajaya, he said it was built for the prime ministers of the future, it was not built for me. We hope that it will last for many generations of prime ministers." -- BERNAMA

SM KTC