

# PM lauds KLIA's milestones

## Dr Mahathir proud of progress made at airport's 21st anniversary

**SEPANG:** After seeing KL International Airport becoming a reality, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad now dreams of a space port in the future when Malaysians can fly to London in three hours.

He said he was heartened by what KLIA had achieved so far, adding that it was currently the 12th busiest international airport in the world.

"In the context of human birthdays, 21 would be deemed the coming of age but for KLIA, it is a testament of its sustainability and relevance.

"As an idea, it started off in the 1980s when we faced problems with the Subang International Airport which, with its one runway, was bursting at its seams.

"It is amazing to witness the palm oil estate morphing into an airport of such beauty and ability to become an icon.

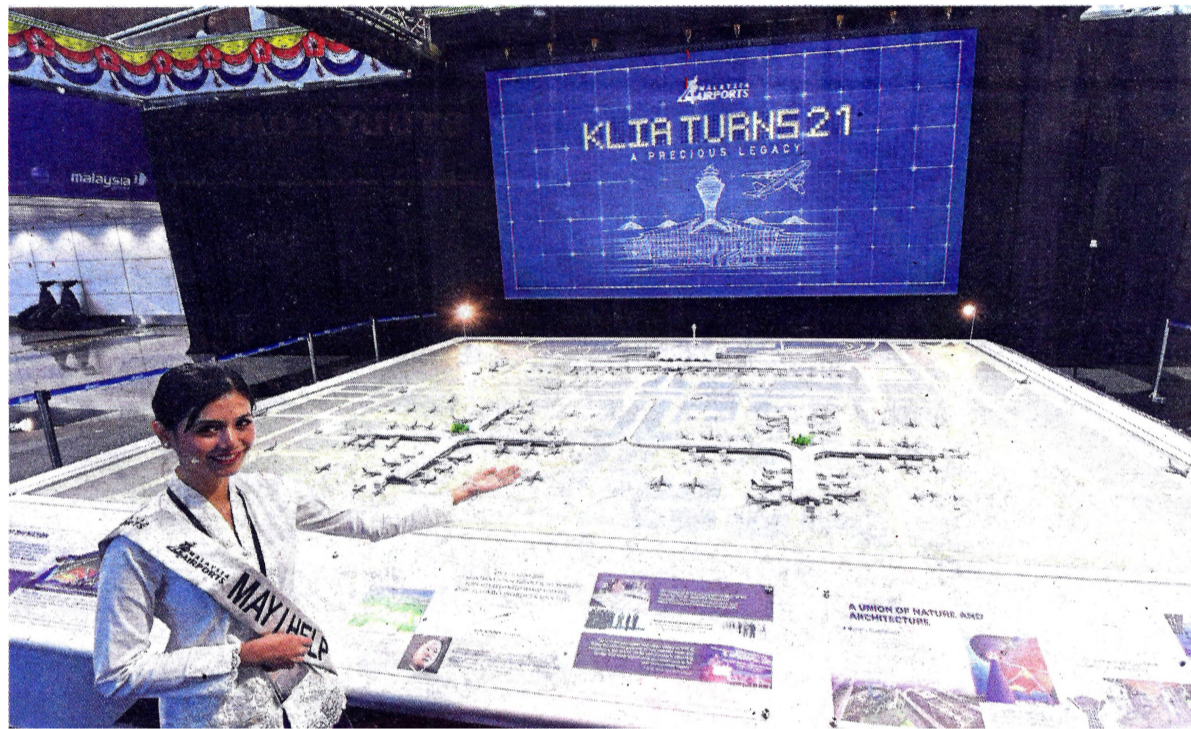
"It is an architectural wonder. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who made this idea or vision a reality," he said during the airport's 21st anniversary celebration here yesterday.

Paying tribute to Kisho Kurokawa, the Japanese architect behind our "Airport in the Forest, Forest in the Airport" concept, Dr Mahathir said KLIA's total capacity had been increased from its original 25 million passengers per year to 75 million currently, with the addition of a second terminal, KLIA2.

"KLIA2 alone has the capacity to handle 45 million passengers a year. KLIA, with its two terminals, is now connected to over a thousand destinations.

"I have been informed that in 2018, the total air traffic for the two terminals is 60 million, roughly four times the number of passengers in 1998," he added.

Also present at the celebration were Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Malaysia Airports chairman Tan Sri Zainun Ali and its group CEO Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin, and Selangor Menteri Besar Amirudin Shari.



**Great strides since:** A Malaysia Airports representative showing KLIA's original terminal layout designed 25 years ago at the 'KLIA turns 21: A precious legacy'. - Bernama

The event saw the commemoration of the airport's historical milestones and achievements since its opening in 1998, as well as the unveiling of a new exhibition site for the original scale model of KLIA's main terminal created 25 years ago by the Japanese firm Kisho Kurokawa Architect and Associates.

Dr Mahathir also praised KLIA's digital transformation towards Airports 4.0 encompassing advanced technologies such as facial recognition, Big Data Analytics and the Internet of Things (IoT).

"I believe these technologies will give Malaysia a competitive edge in the global economy," he said, adding that the government was committed to promoting KLIA as the main doorway of tourism and ensuring the growth of the aviation industry.

"This is evident through the establishment of the Malaysian

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**Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**

Aviation Commission (Mavcom) to regulate the economic aspects of the industry, as well as the National Aviation Consultative Council to address the local aviation development, challenges and direction to aid the country's trade and econo-

my," said Dr Mahathir.

He said the KLIA Aeropolis had also been successful with the development of a Digital Free Trade Park Zone, due to operate in 2020 in collaboration with China's Alibaba group.

In her speech, Zainun said it was important for MAHB to further propel KLIA to bring in more revenue.

"KLIA has also given opportunity to low-cost carriers to grow exponentially by providing, for not 30 million but 45 million passengers at its second terminal KLIA2.

"By way of interest, KLIA2 has somewhat gained a star status, albeit 'under protest'.

"As an airport operator, Malaysia Airports is sensitive to legitimate underlying demands of the industry.

"We are conscious that if the airport structure does not hold up, we will definitely come to grief," said Zainun.