

MAHATHIR-SIA R'R'R'
BM

KUCHING, OCT 13 (BERNAMA) -- THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED TO ALLOW SINGAPORE AIRLINES (SIA) OPERATE TWICE WEEKLY FLIGHTS TO KUCHING AND KOTA KINABALU, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD ANNOUNCED TODAY.

THE APPROVAL WOULD HELP INCREASE TOURIST ARRIVALS IN SARAWAK AND SABAH, HE TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT HERE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID PARTIES INVOLVED WERE STILL NEGOTIATING CONDITIONS FOR THE SIA SERVICE.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DID NOT WANT SIA TO TREAT SARAWAK AS ITS HINTERLAND TO PICK UP SARAWAK PASSENGERS BOUND FOR OTHER SECTORS AND VICE-VERSA, HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO WAS HERE ON A ONE-DAY VISIT, LATER LEFT FOR KOTA KINABALU FOR THE SABAH-LEG OF A NATIONWIDE ELECTION CAMPAIGN TRAIL.-- MORE
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HE SAID A QUOTA OF PASSENGER LOAD FROM SARAWAK WOULD BE SET FOR SIA AND HOPED THE AIRLINE WOULD BRING IN THE TOURISTS TO BOOST SARAWAK'S THRIVING TOURISM INDUSTRY.

THE SUCCESS OF THE VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR WAS PROOF THAT PROJECTS PLANNED BY THE BARISAN NASIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD MEET THEIR OBJECTIVES, HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE NATIONAL TOURISM INDUSTRY HAD POSTED IMPRESSIVE GROWTH WITHIN THREE YEARS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTRY.

THERE WAS AN INCREASE OF 63 PER CENT IN TERMS OF TOURIST ARRIVALS WHILE TOURISM-GENERATED REVENUE ROSE BY 90 PER CENT, HE SAID.

CHIEF MINISTER TAN SRI HAJI ABDUL TAIB MAHMUD, WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE, SAID THE STATE GOVERNMENT WELCOMED AND WAS THANKFUL FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S APPROVAL OF THE SIA FLIGHTS.

STATE ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM MINISTER DATUK AMAR JAMES WONG SAID THE SIA SERVICE TO KUCHING WOULD PROBABLY COMMENCE BY THE END OF THE YEAR OR EARLY NEXT YEAR.-- BERNAMA