

# Bintulu airport to spur growth

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KUCHING: The new RM385mil Bintulu airport will be a catalyst to spur further development of the industrial town, said Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

He said the new airport was historic for Bintulu residents as it had the longest runway (2,750m) in East Malaysia and could take in Boeing 747 aircraft.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will open the new airport on Dec 19. It was completed a year ahead of schedule by Global Upline Sdn Bhd headed by businessman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing.

The present airport in the heart of the town could only take in Fokker aircraft.

Dr Ling, who toured the

project before arriving here for an overnight stay, said Bintulu needed a big airport because it was the main entry point to the proposed Bakun hydro-electric dam project in Kapit Division.

He said a multi-billion ringgit aluminium smelting plant had been planned for the town and other industries would also be set up there.

"The new airport also caters for cargo, like import of equipment for Bakun and to export products.

"Otherwise, we have to use the Kuching Airport, which is eight hours away by road," he told reporters last night.

Bintulu is already home to several multi-billion ringgit industrial projects, like the Malaysian Liquefied Natural Gas plants and the Shell Middle Distillate Synthesis (SMDs) plant.