

Sarawak to have three major airports

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By **STEPHEN THEN**

MIRI: Sarawak will soon earn the distinction of being the state with the most number of airports of international standard.

It will have three such airports operating in Kuching, Bintulu and Miri.

The Miri Airport expansion project to turn it into an international airport is expected to be completed in June, a year ahead of schedule.

It will complement the Kuching International Airport and the new Bintulu Airport, scheduled to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad later this month.

Total cost for the Bintulu and Miri airport projects is RM600mil.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, who inspected the Miri Airport expansion project yesterday, was pleased with the work progress.

"Work is proceeding smoothly and the airport will be ready in time for Sarawak to celebrate its 40th year of independence as part of Malaysia,"

he told reporters after being briefed on the project by representatives of developer Ekran Bhd.

Taib said the state government would also invite Dr Mahathir to declare open the new Miri Airport.

Ekran Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing, who accompanied Taib, said the Bintulu Airport was also completed a year ahead of schedule.

"The Bintulu project costs RM385mil while the Miri project will cost RM220mil," he said.

He added that the Bintulu project cost more because it involved a totally new structure.

Ekran Bhd is the developer for the Miri and Bintulu airport projects.

Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr George Chan, who is also state Finance, Public Utilities and Industrial Development Minister, said next year would be a hectic one for Sarawak in terms of infrastructure projects.