

Major role for Senai Airport in plan, says PM

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JOHOR BARU: The Senai Airport cargo terminal is slated to become an important facility for the development of south Johor.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the cargo terminal has a major role in the recently-announced South Johor Economic Region (SJER) development plan.

"The SJER needs various facilities and the cargo terminal and Senai Airport augur well for the plan," he said when launching the terminal at Senai Airport here.

He said what was needed was to double efforts to boost efficiency and the quality of service to at-

tract and retain customers.

"Senai Airport must provide world-class service and quality. This is the only way to go up."

Senai Airport Terminal Services Sdn Bhd (SATS) acquired the airport for RM80 million from Malaysia Airports Bhd in Nov 2003 under a 50-year concession agreement.

SATS is closely linked to business tycoon Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary, who also controls the Port of Tanjung Pelepas.

The new airport owners will spend RM1 billion over 10 years to upgrade facilities, including RM7 million to boost the passenger terminal.

The cargo complex, which accommodates up to 100,000 tonnes of cargo per annum, is

equipped to handle a fully-loaded Boeing 747 aircraft.

The airport runway and other infrastructure are to be expanded to take in wide-bodied passenger and cargo planes.

When the airport was first opened in 1974, it was designed to reverse cargo and passenger traffic going to Changi Airport in Singapore.

This objective has not been fully achieved, although most passengers now use Senai for flights to Kuala Lumpur and Sabah and Sarawak.

Abdullah said the potential to beef up the airport's cargo handling capacity and services were tremendous, especially with the upcoming SJER development plan.

Earlier, SATS chairman Datuk Ismail Yusof said Senai Airport will develop logistics, warehousing and distribution facilities in a big way with value-added logistics services to customers.

These include a Cargo Agents Complex coming up next to the cargo complex, which will offer 20 separate warehouse units of 2,500 sq ft each and with office space measuring 1,500 sq feet.

Senai Airport general manager Kennedy Ayu said SATS had chalked up some impressive achievements since 2003.

Last October, it handled the world's second largest freighter — the Antanov-124 — which uplifted heavy equipment from Senai for a United Nations relief mission in Islamabad, Pakistan.