

# NEW MUKAH AIRPORT TO DRIVE GROWTH

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**Air hub can support activities in Sarawak Corridor of Renewal Energy, establish economic network, says PM**

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**T**HE new Mukah Airport here, apart from enhancing the air transport network in the state, will strengthen the division's position as a contributor to the economic development of Sarawak.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the airport would boost economic opportunities and generate a multi-layer impact, which, in turn, would benefit the people here.

He said the airport, which comprised a new terminal building and runway spanning 1,500m, had the potential to support activities within the Sarawak Corridor of Renewal Energy (SCORE), and subsequently establish an effective economic network.

"I was informed that the new airport could accommodate and

utilise ATR aircraft that will enable it to fly more passengers compared with the Twin Otter aircraft.

"The new Mukah Airport would also be able to handle greater passenger traffic," he said in his speech when opening the airport here yesterday.

Present were Sarawak caretaker Chief Minister Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

Ismail Sabri said MASwings, the regional carrier and wholly owned subsidiary of Malaysia Airlines, was servicing four flights routes to the division from other parts of the state.

They were the Kuching-Mukah route, with a frequency of 28 flights weekly, seven flights weekly between Miri and Mukah, three flights weekly between Sibul and Mukah, as well as two flights weekly between Bintulu and Mukah.

Air travel, said Ismail Sabri, was an important mode of transport for Sarawakians, as well as the state due to its geographical size and location on the third largest island in the world.

"Airports are not merely a place for departures and arrivals involving aircraft, but also the gateway to transport passengers, as well as goods from various destinations, which are closely linked to economic activities," he explained.

As such, he said, the government, through the Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom), would carry out the rationalisation exercise of Rural Services Agreement (RSA) with the aim to improve the services rendered by MASwings.

He said the exercise would include reviewing the objectives of RAS, the financial implication involved, routes and frequency of RAS flights, air fares, aircraft utilisation for the routes and subsidy distribution mechanism for users of the services from time to time.

"These are among the efforts undertaken by the government to ensure that the people, especially those residing in the rural areas, can have access to the best services," he said.

Apart from building airports that were modern and comfortable for users, Ismail Sabri said the government must also ensure that the air traffic management system would continue to be upgraded in terms of preparedness and capacity, and could accommodate the growth of air traffic.

He said the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia under the Transport Ministry was tasked with strengthening the capacity of the air traffic management system, in line with the modernisation and increase in air traffic.

"Under the 12th Malaysia Plan, the government has approved RM19.4 million worth of projects to upgrade the air traffic management system."



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob arriving for the opening of Mukah Airport yesterday. Behind him on the left is caretaker Chief Minister Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg.