

**Sibu Airport Expansion Yet Another Promise Fulfilled, Says Najib  
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SIBU, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the newly renovated Sibu airport, the new terminal of which he opened today, was a special Malaysia Day gift to the people of Sarawak, especially those in Sibu.

He said the Transport Ministry had completed the expansion of the airport within the allocated time frame and budget, proving that the Barisan Nasional (BN) government fulfilled its promises unlike the opposition which made empty pledges.

A total of RM136.9 million was spent to enlarge the airport terminal from 8,040 sq metres to 15,240 sq metres, install two additional aerobridges and provide four more parking bays to allow for the parking of seven Code C aircraft at any one time.

Najib said that in view of the need to improve the Sarawak economy, the Sibu airport would serve as the gateway to the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (Score), the state's development corridor.

In terms of tourism, he said, some 3.8 million tourist arrivals, 38 per cent of them foreigners, were recorded this year up to now, up from two million during the same period last year. Najib said Sarawak recorded an inflow of RM7.2 billion last year, which contributed 13.5 per cent to the overall domestic income.

Earlier, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said the project was a reflection of the federal government's appreciation of the sensitivities of the local people, in keeping with the aspirations of the people in the central region of Sarawak and, in particular, to raise their socio-economic status.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha said the upgrading of the airport raised its annual passenger handling capacity from 700,000 to 1.8 million.

The additional facilities would enhance passenger handling efficiency from 330 to 900 passengers an hour during peak periods, he added.

Kong said that between January and August this year, the airport handled 781,079 passengers, up from the 727,097 during the same period last year.

It also handled 44 flights a day, which connected Sibul to Kuala Lumpur, Kuching, Miri, Kota Kinabalu, Bintulu and Johor Baharu, he added.

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