



LOMBOK earmarked for accelerated Tourism Development

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IMMEDIATELY after installing new Ministers and Deputy Ministers in the reshuffled Cabinet on Wednesday, 19 October, President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono flew to Lombok to officially open the brand new Lombok International Airport on Thursday 10 October and to lay the cornerstone for the development of the Mandalika integrated tourism resort area in south Lombok on Friday, 21 October. Also present at the series of ceremonies was Dr. Mari Pangestu, former Trade Minister and freshly re-installed as Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy.

The new Lombok International Airport in Central Lombok is located 40 km. south east of Lombok's capital, Mataram, and replaces the old Selaparang Airport at Ampenan. The new airport is 5 times larger than Selaparang, and has a 2,750 meters runway, thus ringing in a new economic era for Lombok in the province of West Nusatenggara. At the official opening, President Yudhoyono ordered the runway to be further extended to 3,000m in order to accommodate the new generation wide-bodied aircrafts.

At the moment Garuda Indonesia serves twice daily flights to Lombok from Jakarta and once daily from Bali. Other airlines serving Lombok include Lion Air, Batavia Air, Merpati Airlines, Wings Air and Trans Nusa. While SilkAir flies Singapore-Lombok.

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The next day President Yudhoyono broke ground on the Mandalika Resort located by Tanjung Aan and Lombok's Kuta Beach. This is an extensive 1,250 hectares estate prepared to build top class accommodation and convention facilities. President Yudhoyono reminded all that besides attracting large-scale investments, tourism development must take into account, and involve the local population, as well as respect local values and traditions.

This part of Central Lombok is the home of the indigenous Sasak ethnic group who still adhere strongly to their traditional values. The traditional Sasak village of Sade is located south of the new airport. This southern part of Lombok has swathes of beautiful white beaches and coves, pristine blue seas, high surf and picturesque islands. But, during the dry season, this of the island part receives little rain and many ricefields lie parched. It is hoped, therefore, that like the Nusa Dua resort in Bali, the Mandalika Resort will be able to accelerate tourism to the island, thereby improving the lot of the local population.

Even at the ground breaking ceremony, a number of investors already pledged their interest, including the Rajawali Corporation, Siamen Yijamei and the Commerce Bank, said Coordinating Minister, Hatta Rajasa.

Spurred on by the opening of the new Lombok airport, a number of investors signed MoUs at the Ground Breaking Ceremony that included an agreement by the Global Land Development of the MNC group, who intend to build a Hotel and Convention Center and an eventual Formula 1 circuit. Rahmat Gobel intends to build a hotel on 350 hectares of land, complete with clean water plant. While the Rajawali Group plans to build a hotel on 100 hectares land by Tanjung Aan. MoUs were also signed to build a tourism school and a nursing school.

Minister Hatta Rajasa said that the Lombok International Airport and the Mandalika Integrated Resort form an essential part to continue to develop Bali and the West and East Nusatenggara provinces for Tourism and Food Security sectors in Indonesia's accelerated economic masterplan.

Located immediately east of the island of Bali, Lombok is already known in the world as a most attractive island with sweeping white sand beaches and looming Mount Rinjani as background. Its pristine seas are ideal for diving and surfing. Lombok's pearl culture produces the best, most sought after South Sea pearls. Already Senggigi Beach and the islets opposite called the Gili Trawangan, Gili Meno and Gili Air are visited by tourists in droves.