

MALAYSIA'S FIRST DIGITAL ISLAND

PM FULFILS PLEDGE TO LANGKAWI

RM200 million allocated to improve Internet coverage

ADIE SURI ZULKEFLI
AND EMBUN MAJID
LANGKAWI
news@nst.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday fulfilled his pledge to bring more development to Langkawi, improve the socio-economic status of the people and turn the island into a world-class tourism destination.

Najib began his one-day working visit here by launching a RM200 million digital initiative to turn the island into Malaysia's first "digital island" at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre here.

The Langkawi Digital Initiative aims to boost the island's 3D and 4G LTE Internet coverage as part of a comprehensive plan. It is set to transform five main target clusters – smart economy, smart tourism, smart community, smart environment and smart security.

Under the initiative, the island would be connected by a 152km fibre optic cable which links to 47 telecommunications tower and the 10 more that will be constructed.

It will boost the island's Internet coverage where the internet coverage is at 99 per cent for 2G and 95 per cent 3G.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the launch of Langkawi Digital Carnival 2017 at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre in Langkawi yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

Four Malaysia Internet Centres, which offer services such as a digital centre, and eRezeki and eUsahawan initiatives, will be built here and in Pulau Tuba.

Eight schools here will be the first in the country to be introduced to the "Cashless @ School" plan.

Najib also launched a RM247 million People's Housing Project (PPR) to be developed in Ulu Melaka and Kuah.

A total of 1,000 houses will be

built under the two PPR projects. They will be sold on a rent-to-own basis to the island's people.

Najib said five 11 storey buildings would be built. Two of them will be in Ulu Melaka and three in Kuah.

He said the two projects were not in the Federal Budget but were included upon request from the island's member of parliament, Datuk Nawawi Ahmad.

"This is not a politically-motivated project because it is al-

ready at the implementation level. The contractor has been appointed and it will be completed by 2019," he said.

Present were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah, Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Tan Sri Noh Omar, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Shabery Cheek and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Shahidan Kassim.

Najib said the rent-to-own concept would benefit Langkawi folk who faced difficulties in obtaining loans from financial institutions, due to the lack of supporting documents such as pay slips.

He said he believed that the concept would result in local folk owning all the units.

Najib also opened the upgraded Sungai Chenang fishing jetty at the event. The upgrade cost RM9.16 million.

He said it was expected to boost fish landing for some 400 fishermen and was part of the government's efforts to help the island's fishing community.

"Each fisherman here earns an average of RM2,000. Some earn RM3,000 but none earns less than RM1,500 per month. The government tops this with a monthly aid of RM300 for all fishermen."

Najib announced several allocations, which included RM5 million to upgrade village roads and a RM5,000 incentive to each of the estimated 1,000 cabbies here to migrate to Uber and Grab, that Nawawi had requested.

"We cannot stop developing. If we do, other people will overtake us and we will be left behind. Thus, I urge cabbies to migrate to Uber and Grab. They can use the RM5,000 incentive to buy a new car and migrate to the system."

On a request to upgrade Langkawi Hospital's facilities, Najib said studies would be needed due to the high cost and that it would be included in Barisan Nasional's election manifesto for the island.

LANGKAWI-SHENZHEN

Najib launches new AirAsia route

LANGKAWI: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday launched AirAsia's new direct route from here to Shenzhen, China, at Lang Merah Complex here.

The route is expected to boost the island's status as a world-class tourism destination.

Present were Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Abd Aziz Kaprawi and AirAsia group chief executive officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes.

The thrice weekly route, which commenced on Aug 9, is set to

boost tourism here, in line with the Langkawi Development Authority's mission to tap into new foreign markets.

AirAsia flies to seven destinations from the island – Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johor Baru, Kuching, Singapore, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

Tony expressed his appreciation for Najib's efforts in reducing airport tax.

"We can see that through his (Najib) leadership, the number of international tourists have increased from 87,754 passengers

in 2015 to 187,433 passengers last year, an increase of 120 per cent."

The number, he said, represented a contribution of RM300 million to the country's gross domestic product based on a multiplier effect of 12.

Last year was the first year when the number of international tourists outnumbered domestic tourists.

"We are encouraged by this and this year, we have flown more than one million tourists to Langkawi." BERNAMA



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and AirAsia group chief executive officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes (second from right) at the launch of AirAsia's new direct route from Langkawi to Shenzhen, China, in Langkawi yesterday. PIC BY AMRAN HAMID