

THE CONSTRUCTION OF LOMBOK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

NOT WITHOUT PROBLEMS

The construction of Lombok International Airport in Pujut, near Penujak, Central Lombok did not gain thorough approval from the community. Initially, the construction plan was rejected by the community. There was even a massive demonstration by the people from the communities around the construction location. One of the big demonstrations was made by the farmers who were in living in the communities in the construction location. Disagreements with the officials were inevitable. Other than that, demonstration acts were frequently done by people as a form of rejection against the construction of the Lombok International Airport (Bandara International Lombok, or BIL).

At least 500 farmers in Lombok held a demonstration at the West Nusa Tenggara Governor's Office in Jl Pejanggik Mataram, on Thursday 23rd September 2008.

Afternoon. Among their demands was the rejection of the construction of the BIL in Penujak, Central Lombok District. The farmers, who were members of the Farmer's Union (Serikat Tani, or Serta) NTB, came in five trucks and other vehicles. Besides the farmers, a number of NGOs and students joined the demonstration that was held on National Farmer's Day on the 24th of September. The farmers came from the Districts of West, Central and East Lombok, and some representatives also from Sumbawa.

The plan to build the international airport in Penujak was first started about a year ago after its construction plan was set. The first plan was to start construction in 2005. Actually the construction process was first started in 1994 but it was hampered by problems of land release.

Although it is opposed by many people, especially the farmers, the House of Representatives approved the plan to construct the international airport. They saw that it was an opportunity to increase the growth of the economy in NTB. "The construction is done in order to open a strategy for the development of Lombok, so that we can develop our region with independence, not having to depend on Bali for access," said Vice Chairman of the Commission V DPR RI, Erman Suparno.



The construction of the airport has started and is still going on. Some central government officials like Vice President Jusuf Kalla and a number of ministers have also vis-

ited and surveyed the construction process. Meanwhile, the Governor of NTB, KH Zainul Majdi, has asked that the construction be done as quickly as possible so that it

can start operating in 2010 along with the scheduled operation of the largest tourism area in Southeast Asia, which is to be done by Emaar Properties.