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Ling-Airport

SITE FOR NORTHERN REGION AIRPORT TO BE PICKED SOON

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 (Bernama) -- The government will decide soon on the site of the proposed Northern Regional International Airport (NRIA), Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today.

"A decision has to be made as soon as possible as the price of land is not going down," he told a weekly news conference at his office here.

As the Bayan Lepas International Airport had become congested, construction of the new airport was vital to cater for the ever increasing cargo and passenger demands, he said.

Once a decision on the site had been made, a 800ha piece of land would have to be acquired immediately for the project, he said.

Dr Ling said it would not be easy to decide as both the Perak and Kedah state governments had shown keen interest in the project.

The government would have to decide whether to build the NRIA in north Perak or south Kedah, he said.

He said a survey had been conducted to determine the need for a regional airport in the north or whether there should be a shift to the centre.

The proposed airport would have two-level facilities for departure and arrival lounges, two runways and a complex capable of handling 100,000 tonnes of cargo a year.

Dr Ling said the idea for the regional airport was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad based on what he saw at several cities during his overseas trips.

"The NRIA would be an ideal airport for the year 2000 and in the meantime the KLIA at Sepang would by then be ready for use," he said.

On the directive for Port Klang to be operated round-the-clock, Dr Ling said it was aimed at making the port as attractive as possible to foreign vessels.

"Ships can call at the port any time, any day, 365 days a year with effect from April 1. How can you turn away ships calling at the port on Sundays?" he asked.

He said the government had decided to cut unnecessary expenditure like payments of overtime to staff of the port authority, customs, immigration and health departments at the port.

Port Klang would be one of the cheapest ports in the region providing services 24 hours a day, and the move was very much welcome by ship owners and their agents, he added. -- Bernama

ZAB YBY