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Anwar-airport

ANWAR:EPU STUDYING SECOND AIRPORT FOR KEDAH

KUALA LUMPUR, June 12 (Bernama) -- The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) is studying the feasibility of having a new international airport on reclaimed land in Kuala Muda in Kedah, Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

He told reporters here an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the proposed project was also being studied.

"The Prime Minister's view is that the proposed project be expedited and I have directed the EPU to proceed with the feasibility study and the EIA with a view to implementing it," he said after launching a fund to set up a National Institute of Ophthalmology at the Hussein Onn Eye Hospital here.

The proposed institute is aimed at enlarging the pool of trained personnel in that discipline.

Anwar was commenting on Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid's statement yesterday on the proposed airport to be built on a man-made island off the Kuala Muda coast, 140 km from Alor Setar, the state capital.

According to Sanusi, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has approved the project recently and wanted its implementation expedited.

The proposed airport, to be built on a 6,300 ha site to be developed by Samudera Baru Darul Aman Sdn Bhd, is expected to cater for tourist arrivals in northern peninsula now handled by the Pulau Pinang and Langkawi international airports.

Asked whether the proposed new airport would affect the Pulau Pinang international airport, Anwar said: "For the time being we can't (make an assessment)... because the study will view it from the entire northern sector requirement."

Anwar said the government has identified the proposed site but it would have to look at all the sectors before making a final decision.

He said the EPU study on the proposed project would also take into account views of Malaysia Airlines (MAS).

In PULAU PINANG, the Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said the state government was awaiting directive and details from the federal government on how the proposed new airport could complement the Bayan Lepas International Airport.

"If the new airport materialises, the Bayan Lepas International Airport will have a new and equally important role to play," he told reporters.

He said Sanusi and him first raised the question of the proposed new airport about two months ago suggesting that Kedah and Pulau Pinang work together on the project on reclaimed land at their common border.

On whether the proposed new airport would affect the state's tourism industry, Koh said it might actually be a boon to tourism in Pulau Pinang if fast speed water taxis and ferry services link it directly to Batu Feringghi, Georgetown and other locations in Pulau Pinang.

He said the Bayan Lepas International Airport would strengthen its role as the cargo and freight distribution hub for the electronics, computer and related industries in the state.

He said it would also serve the silicon corridor, stretching from Bayan Lepas, Perai to Kulim, in Kedah.

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