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Anwar: No need for two airports in Penang now

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PENANG, Sat. - Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today there was no reason at the moment for Penang to have two international airports.

He said therefore there was no reason to consider a proposal to build a second airport in the State.

Speaking after chairing meetings of the Penang Bumiputera Steering Committee and the State Umno Liaison committee, he said no one was suggesting that the Bayan Lepas airport be closed down now.

"It will remain functional for a long time to come. As of now, I don't think we need two airports in Penang," he said when asked if the proposal to have the regional airport in Kuala Muda in Kedah meant that Penang's proposal had been scrapped.

Anwar said the earlier proposal was to have the airport sited in Bertam, but since the site had been taken over by the Urban Development Authority (UDA), the Penang Regional Development Authority (Perda) and the Johor Corporation and a lot of development plans had been made, the area was no longer suitable for an airport.

Asked about the alternative proposal to site it at Byram estate instead, Anwar said unlike Bertam, no proposal was made on this area.

"It was discussed and perhaps a preliminary study was done."

Asked if the Government had firmly decided to site the regional airport at Kuala Muda, he said the focus was for the moment on the proposed project.

However, Anwar indicated that it was not yet a certainty as he said the Government would have to wait for results of a feasibility and environment impact assessment study now being done.

"We have to wait for the reports and look at the direct benefits of the placement of the airport there to Kedah and Penang."

Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid on June 11 announced that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had on June 7 faxed his approval from London for the proposed airport to be built on a man-made island off the Kuala Muda coast - modelled after the Kansai International airport in Japan.

Asked how the Government would bear the cost of the airport, Anwar said it was still too premature to think about that.

"However, if we use the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) experience, we could set up a limited company to float the funds needed and this could greatly reduce the burden on the Government," he added.

Later, Anwar visited Halaman Damai in Georgetown, one of several delayed housing projects in the State by the developer Duniaga Sdn Bhd.

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