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Anwar calls for study, EIA report

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ACTING Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has directed the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department to proceed with the feasibility study on the proposed international airport on reclaimed land in Kuala Muda in Kedah.

An environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the project will also be undertaken.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has given his views on the urgency for the implementation of the project," Anwar said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"In view of this, I have directed the EPU proceed with the feasibility study and EIA so that we can look at the overall implementation of the project," he told reporters after launching the Tun Hussein Onn National Eye Hospital's education and building fund.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, was asked to comment on a report on the proposed new international airport to be built on a man-made island off Kuala Muda, some 140km from Alor Star.

The new airport will be located under the RM30 billion Kedah coastal reclamation project to be built between nine and 14 artificial islands along the 100km coastline.

On whether the proposed airport project in Kedah will have any impact on the existing Penang International Airport in Bayan Lepas, Anwar said: "We cannot make an assessment yet ... in the study, we will be looking at every aspect of the northern sectors' requirements."

Asked whether Kedah will be the location of the proposed airport that will cater to the needs of the northern states in the peninsula, Anwar said the Government has identified the area but it has to look at all aspects and sectors.

Yesterday, Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid said the Federal Government has approved the construction of the proposed airport which will be modelled after the Kansai International Airport in Osaka, Japan.

The reclamation project, involving 6,300ha, was proposed by Kuala Lumpur-based Samudera Baru Darul Aman Sdn Bhd and approved by the State Government last month.

Sanusi said Dr Mahathir gave the approval on Saturday.

The State Government received a fascimile from the Prime Minister from London on June 7.

Once ready, the proposed airport will complement the Langkawi and Penang International airports in the northern region.

With the approval, Kedah will have a domestic and two international airports.

Currently, Kedah has the Langkawi International Airport and a domestic airport in Kepala Batas, near Alor Star.

Besides the airport, the reclamation project will also see the construction of a deep-sea port, petrochemical storage tanks, an industrial zone and tourism facilities which is expected to cost some RM80 billion.

It is understood that Samudera Baru Darul Aman Sdn Bhd received the letter of award to reclaim some 2,800ha for the proposed airport project from the Kedah Government on Wednesday.

The company had proposed to the State Government to build an airport, deep-sea port and industrial zone at two of the islands under the

reclamation project.

It was also learnt that the National Hydraulic Research Institute of Malaysia, a consultant appointed by the State Government to carry out EIA on the project, has already begun its study and expected to complete it by October.

However, the State Government is said to be pushing the consultant to complete the EIA report earlier than the initial target.

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