

14/06/1997

Build important infrastructure now, says Dr Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik today said the Government should develop important infrastructure now while there is still abundance of land.

He said projects such as the proposed international airport to be built on a man-made island off the coast of Kedah, should be built now so that they would not create future bottlenecks for development.

"In crowded places like Europe where there are no more greenfields, no new airports have been built for the past 20 years except for Munich (Germany)," he said after launching the book Biographical Dictionary of the Chinese in Malaysia at Universiti Malaya.

When asked whether construction of the proposed airport would go ahead, he said that would depend on the feasibility study conducted by the Economic Planning Unit.

He said although the Government had agreed to the construction of a Northern Regional International Airport, the feasibility study was still needed "just to make sure we do not run into anything unexpected".

"Many other sites were proposed but after conducting soil and other tests, they were found to be unsuitable."

He said the EPU, which would act as an overseer, would approach their consultants and other Government agencies when the study was being conducted.

Asked whether his Ministry had been invited to be part of the study, Dr Ling said that it would be "automatic" for it to be included.

"Existing airports in Penang, Alor Star and Langkawi cannot be expanded as there was a shortage of land for additional infrastructure like second runways."

On whether the new airport would affect air traffic of the other international and domestic airports in Penang, Langkawi and Alor Star, Dr Ling said highways and the bridge connecting Penang with the mainland would make access to the proposed airport easier.

"I do not think that we will need so many airports in the region," he said, adding that once a regional airport was in place, other airports might become redundant.

He declined to comment on whether any of the other airports in the region would be closed as a result of the new airport.

Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid had said the proposed airport on the man-made island would complement the Penang and Langkawi International Airports.

He also said he had received the approval of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad through a facsimile on June 7.

(END)