

16/08/1997

Cargo complex to built as planned

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THE construction of the new multi-million cargo complex at the Bayan Lepas International Airport will proceed even though the airport will eventually cease to be the international airport for the northern region.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the new cargo complex on the Batu Maung side of the airport is to cater to the pressing needs of the cargo business today.

"In fact, the cargo movement to the airport had already exceeded the present cargo complex's maximum capacity of 100,000 tonnes of consignments a year," he told a news conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Ling said work on the new cargo terminal to handle up to 350,000 tonnes of consignments a year has commenced and the terminal is expected to be completed next year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was quoted on Friday as saying that the Bayan Lepas International Airport would eventually be closed and used for other purposes when a new international airport is built on a man-made island off the Kedah coast.

Dr Ling said the fate of the Bayan Lepas International Airport is similar to that of the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang when all of its activities would be moved to the new KL International Airport in Sepang.

"The Subang airport will become an air force base. It can also become the centre of the aerospace industry in Malaysia or the centre for all Haj flights.

"Alternatively, it can act as the base for flight training schools or an exhibition and convention centre with the added attractions of a runway next to it," he said.

Dr Ling said there is a variety of things that one can do with the old airports. "(The shift of activities) does not mean that the existing facilities will go to waste because there are so many other uses."

Asked when construction work on the Subang airport will begin, Dr Ling said "as soon as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report is ready and approval is given for the proposed plan".

"If the EIA says no, then we have to make adjustments (to the plan) because EIA is not intended to prohibit, but to lessen the impact of the environment," he said.

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