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## New international airport for Kedah

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TRANSPORT Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the Government is building a new international airport in Kedah as it is not feasible to expand the existing airports in Langkawi and Penang.

Limited space does not allow for the construction of a second landing strip at the airports, he said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"We have to put in important pieces of infrastructure in this region while there is still land available so that infrastructure will not become a bottleneck in the future," he told reporters after launching the "Biographical Dictionary of the Chinese in Malaysia".

Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid had said that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has given his approval for the proposed airport to be built on a man-made island off Kuala Muda, part of the RM30 billion Kedah coastal reclamation project.

Citing Europe as an example of a place facing land congestion, he said only one new airport had been built in Munich in the past 20 years.

"The need for another airport in the northern region will have to be rationalised at the right time and the right place," he said, adding that an assessment on the impact of the new airport on the Bayan Lepas International Airport in Penang and the Langkawi International Airport could not be made yet as a feasibility study has to be completed first.

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 airport. An environmental impact assessment (EIA) will also be carried out.

Ling said the EPU, as the overseer of the project, "will have a handful of consultants who they know can do the job well, and they will bring in the current and relevant agencies so that they can give their input."

He also added that the Transport Ministry will "automatically be involved" in the feasibility study.

He said the Government had in principle agreed to have a Northern Regional International Airport within Kedah borders.

On whether Malaysia Airlines will be taking legal action against the Singapore Airport Terminal Service for causing damage to its 777-200IGW, Ling described it as "a small incident and was not done on purpose."

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