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King to open RM9 billion airport on June 29

Izatun Hanim Shari

PETALING JAYA, Sun. - The ultra-modern RM9 billion Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang will be opened by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar on June 29.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today the Cabinet had agreed on the date last week.

The announcement brings to an end months of waiting and speculation, during which the opening date of the airport - reputed to be one of the world's best - was twice postponed.

It was originally planned to be operational on Jan 1 but later rescheduled to April.

On March 10, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced a further delay to the opening of the airport and said that it would be begin commercial operations in June, although no specific date was announced.

The Cabinet, however, agreed to allow chartered flights to operate at KLIA prior to its opening to commercial flights. Last Wednesday, the KLIA received its first passengers with the landing of two Transmile Air haj flights from Jeddah.

The opening date, which falls on a Monday, was decided based on the minimum amount of air traffic at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang.

This is to facilitate the smooth movement of equipment from Subang to Sepang, a distance of 50km, on the eve of the KLIA's opening.

"The KLIA will take over the activities of Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport at midnight on the same day," Dr Ling said.

He told reporters after the Wesak Day celebrations at Kwan Inn Teng Temple that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would deliver a keynote address.

Dr Ling said the consultant company for the shift was German-based Agiplan, which manages the Munich Airport.

On the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport, he said it would be used by the air force in addition to being the site for a flight training school, aerospace centre, and convention exhibition centre, among others.

He added that the debate on whether domestic flights should operate from Subang was still ongoing.

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