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Ling-Airport

HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TO KEEP KLIA ON TOP, SAYS LING

SEPANG, July 25 (Bernama) -- The KL International Airport (KLIA) must continue to improve in all aspects to maintain its position as one of the best in the world.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today it was difficult being at the top and the challenge now was to sustain and even increase the level of achievement so far.

"We must have the attitude that will enable us to make sure that what we do this year is better than last year and what we do next year is better than this year," he said when asked what would it take to improve the KLIA after having won a string of accolades for excellence in various categories.

Dr Ling told reporters this after opening Malaysia's Longest Golf Drive on the KLIA Runway event held in conjunction with the airport's first anniversary, here.

On the recent suggestion by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that airports be accorded star ratings similar to hotels, Dr Ling said the most appropriate authority to make the judgment would be the passengers themselves through surveys by bodies such as the International Air Travel Association (IATA).

On Malaysia Airlines' plans to face the Y2K Bug, the minister said the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and IATA would come up with recommendations on how airlines would deal with the problem.

"All the safety measures are being looked into by them and they will come up with the recommendations," he said, adding that this might include making certain air routes one-way street.

It has been reported that air routes in the Asia-Pacific would be separated on Dec 31 to provide direct point-to-point travel without criss-crossing under a contingency plan against any Y2K glitches caused by some microchips' inability to recognise dates after 1999.

On another matter, Dr Ling, who is also MCA president, criticised PAS for harbouring the intention to close newspaper companies and television stations deemed supporters of the ruling Barisan Nasional if it (PAS) came to power.

"If this is implemented, we will have no check and balance, no warning system because the media will never be able to tell the people what is going on.

"Only PAS and the DAP can think of that sort of thing and it's mad, it's going back 1,000 years," he said when commenting on an Utusan Malaysia front page report quoting PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor on the matter.

Meanwhile, Malaysia Airports Berhad managing director Datuk Khairuddin Ibrahim said the company would continue to operate small airports in the country despite sustaining losses from such operations.

He said the losses were insignificant and were not eating into Malaysia Airports' profitability.

Khairuddin was asked to comment on the reported annual loss of RM600,000 made by 22 small airports operated by the company. There are 38 airports under the company.

On whether there were plans to close such airports, he said: "As long as there are flights, we as the airport operator will continue our service. Once the airline decides that there is no need to have flights into those airports, then we will close them."

On the proposed listing of Malaysia Airports on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, he said he would leave it to the government to make the announcement on the matter.

Khairuddin also said that one year after its opening, operations at the KLIA had stabilised and Malaysia Airports was now looking at enhancing the services provided to its customers.

The main aim of today's event, hosted by the Pan Pacific Hotel KLIA, was to break the current record of the longest drive of 340.4m set by full-time golfer Mohamed Khalifah Ali last year registered in the Malaysian Book of Records.

Part of the entrance fee collected would be channelled by the hotel to help Kosovar refugees.

-- BERNAMA

MAM JK