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Airports-Hub
MANY WINNERS WILL EMERGE FROM "WAR" TO BECOME REGIONAL AIR-HUB

    KUALA LUMPUR, July 21 (Bernama) -- The keen competition among major
airports in the region to establish themselves as the regional hub will not
see just one clear winner but many winners in various respects.
    Airports Council International (ACI)-Pacific President, George Bellew
said the continuous efforts undertaken by the various airports to upgrade
and improve their services would result in a number of them in the Pacific
and the Asean region becoming significant hubs.
    "It won't result in one airport being declared the winner and the
others, losers," he told reporters at the end of the four-day 9th
ACI-Pacific Regional Assembly and Conference, here today.
    Welcoming positive and healthy competition, he said the competition to
offer better facilities and services would, however, produce one sure
winner -- the air travellers -- who would be able to enjoy their travel
better.
    And, there would be no losers because all the airports were going after
an ever growing market of clients and consumers, and not after a limited
one or competing over a territory that was shrinking or limited in size, he
said.
    On the Y2K millennium bug, Bellew, who is the chief executive of
Christchurch International Airport Ltd of New Zealand, said most airports
in the Pacific region would be Y2K compliant by year end, including the
Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA).
    "If any, there would most probably be very very few which could not be
Y2K compliant on time for the new millennium," he said.
    He added that however, nobody could or would say with certainty that
they were completely ready as the operations of airports in that respect
depended also on other related and equally important services.
    When asked to comment by a local journalist on the public's complaints
that travelling to and from KLIA by limousine was expensive, Bellew was
seemingly quite taken by surprised as he had earlier said that he was very
impressed with the expressways leading to KLIA and its easy access.
    "I really don't know... RM60 to RM80 could be expensive... but compared
to fares at other international airports it should be reasonable," he said.
    He cited examples of fares as high as US$200 per trip from one airport
in a country to its capital city which was only 30 minutes away and, in
Christchurch where taxi fares from the airport to the city costs an
equivalent of RM35 for a six-mile journey.
    Noting that he was aware of the new express electric-rail line
connecting Kuala Lumpur Central City Terminal, now still under
construction, to the KLIA, Bellew said he believed the relevant authorities
in Malaysia were taking steps to overcome any complaint by the public.
    "Things just don't take shape at a click of the fingers... not like the
magic show," he said, adding that planning and implementing hugh projects
to support the KLIA would certainly take some time.
    In his closing remarks earlier, the ACI-Pacific president commended
Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who on Sunday had opened the
conference, for his indepth understanding and grasp of issues related to
the airport and aviation industry.
    He also invited the 250 delegates attending the conference to the 10th
ACI-Pacific annual Regional Conferece to held in Christchurch in April next
year.

ACI-Pacific represents 57 regular members and five affiliate members, operating some 160 airports in 27 Pacific Rim countries. Its aim is to foster communication between its members, provide quality member services and to effectively represent the voice of airports for the Pacific Region.

-- BERNAMA

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