

15 AUG 2003

Tioman

WORKS ON TIOMAN AIRPORT TO COMMENCE YEAR-END

TIOMAN, Aug 15 (Bernama) -- Works on the Tioman Airport will commence by year-end following completion of the environmental impact assessment, said Finance Minister II Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Mohamed Jarjis.

He said that the design of the airport was being drafted and the cost of construction was being estimated.

The relevant parties involved in the project including the Public Works Department were conducting various analyses and studies to ensure that it would not affect the environment, he said.

"The construction of the airport will not affect the environment as we will ensure that it retains the environment-friendly concept.

"It will be constructed at sea, along the shoreline. We cannot have the construction on land as it will damage a large part of the natural surroundings," he said after opening the Tioman Customs Complex last night.

Dr Jamaluddin said that the modern airport, to provide sophisticated tourism facilities in Tioman, would be built to accommodate Boeing 737 aircraft.

The minister said that the existing terminal would be renovated to be turned into a shopping centre in line with the island's duty free status.

"Even though Tioman is better known for the beauty of its sea and beaches, the shopping centre will serve the island's duty free status and encourage the tourists, expected to come in larger number, to shop," he said.

Jamaluddin, who is Member of Parliament for Rompin, also said that a marina mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was under construction at the Kampung Tekek jetty.

He said that the RM40 million marina was expected to be completed in two years.

"This is another effort to attract more tourists to Tioman. At present, there is no way for vessels like yachts to berth at the eastern part of the island and the marina will change all this, enabling vessels from Singapore and Thailand for instance to have access," he said.

Asked to comment on speculation that Tioman would accommodate another casino like in Genting Highlands, the minister said that there would not be any gambling facilities on the resort island.

Dr Jamaluddin said that the management of Berjaya Tioman Beach Resort, the only place in Tioman where 15 slot machines are available, in a special room, had given its undertaking to terminate this facility even though it has a valid licence to operate them.

Present at the opening of the RM25 million customs complex, which will play a larger role, were Royal Customs Department Director-general Tan Sri Abdul Jalil Abdul Mutalib, Pahang Customs Director Abdul Wahid Abdul Ghani and Finance Ministry Secretary-General Tan Sri Shamsuddin Hitam.

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