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AirAsia to fly from Langkawi to Phuket starting in January

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - AirAsia, Malaysia's first low-fare and no-frills airline, will fly from Langkawi to Phuket, Thailand, its first overseas destination come January 2004, Transport Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy said today.

He said the Ministry allowed the airline to fly to Phuket following a meeting between the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Thai counterpart Thaksin Shinawatra.

Chan said the Ministry would also like to see Malaysia Airlines fly to Phuket as well, "but it is not ready".

Speaking at a Press conference at his office here, Chan said there was also a possibility that AirAsia or MAS may start direct flights between Langkawi and Haadyai and between Langkawi and Bangkok.

He said Malaysia welcomed airlines from Thailand to fly to some of Malaysian destinations from any part of Thailand so that joint effort could be made by both the airlines to promote these places.

"Currently there is no air link between the two famous tourism islands. There is land link but air link will speed tourism activities between the two destinations."

At the Malaysia-Thailand Technology and Business Partnership Dialogue meeting in Langkawi last month Dr Mahathir and Thaksin agreed to promote tourism between the countries through Langkawi and Phuket.

Currently, AirAsia flies to domestic destinations such as Langkawi, Kota Baru, Kuala Terengganu, Kuching, Miri, Kota Kinabalu, Labuan and Tawau.

It was reported recently that the budget airline would also be adding 11 Boeing 737 planes to its fleet of seven aircraft. AirAsia started with two aircraft in 2001 after Tune Air Sdn Bhd, the operators of AirAsia, took over a lost-making company from DRB-Hicom Bhd on Dec 12, 2001.

On Gerakan's unhappiness over MCA's acceptance of two of its State assemblymen, Lim Chien Aun (Bayan Lepas) and Lim Boo Chang (Datuk Keramat), as members three days after they won the seats under the Gerakan ticket in 1999, Chan said the best way to discuss any differences would be through the Barisan Nasional channel.

"We are not prepared to discuss any issue on the swapping of seats openly... especially through the Press," he added.

He said asking for additional seats, dissatisfaction over seat allocation or seat swapping would be done at the BN meetings.