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Pulau Tioman to get new airport within two years

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PULAU Tioman can expect to have a new airport capable of handling aircraft

the size of Boeing 737s within the next two years.

Second Finance Minister Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis said the airport will

not cost more than RM500 million.

Pending an environmental impact assessment study, the construction of the airport is expected to start by year-end.

To be located in Kampung Paya, about 10 minutes drive from the five-star

Berjaya Tioman Beach Resort, the airport will have an exquisite feature in

that its runway will be built on the sea.

"The runway will run parallel to the airport terminal, which will be erected along the beach.

"The airport will be able to cater to bigger size planes, hence we can look forward to welcome Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia and other

international

airliners into the island," Jamaludin told reporters after opening the new

Pulau Tioman Royal Customs office yesterday.

Also present were Royal Customs director-general Tan Sri Halil Abd Mutalib and Pahang State Royal Customs director Abd Wahid Abd Ghani.

The existing airport in Pulau Tioman has a single runway and is only capable of handling the landing of the Dash 7 aircraft operated by

Berjaya

Air.

Jamaludin said preliminary observation shows that it will be more cost-

effective to have the airport's runway built on water as it prevents the need for carrying out rock blasting, which will not only be costly but also pose a threat to Pulau Tioman's ecology.

"According to a consultant, the cost of having the whole airport, including the runway built on land, will be in the region of RM500 million

but this can be far less if the runway is built on the water.

"The exact cost will only be known after the Works Department completes

its evaluation of the project," he said.

On the marina project which was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Jamaludin said construction works have started recently.

"The project, which will make it possible for the berthing of yachts and

large passenger ships, will take about two years to complete.

"We have decided to expedite the project as it can further spur the tourism industry, which is a major foreign exchange earner to our country," he said.

In his speech earlier, Jamaludin said the Royal Customs has targeted to collect revenue amounting to RM28 billion in 2004.

"We are on course to meet the RM26 billion target set for this year, which is an improvement from RM22 billion collected in 2002," he added.

Jamaludin also urged the Customs to step up vigilance against illegal activities such as smuggling in view of Pulau Tioman's current status as a duty-free island.

The island has been gazetted as a duty-free zone effective September 1 last year.