

Kong: KLIA2 move had nothing to do with MOT
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5 – Transport Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha today washed his hands of KLIA2's relocation, saying the decision to shift sites was made by Malaysia Airports (MAHB) and did not involve his ministry.

"I don't have much to answer because the decision was not made by MOT... I'm sure Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd have their reasons and explanation," he told reporters in Putrajaya today.

DAP publicity chief Tony Pua yesterday urged Kong (picture) to take action against Transport Ministry officials who had signed off on the move without realising its cost implications.

Pua has alleged that the decision to relocate the low-cost carrier terminal from KLIA North to its present site in KLIA West had caused construction costs to nearly double to RM3.9 billion, with an estimated RM1.2 billion spent on earthworks alone.

The Petaling Jaya MP said this was because the soil in KLIA West had "poor bearing qualities and is not suitable for airport construction without undertaking significant engineering measures", as noted in the 1992 KLIA Master Plan.

He also claimed yesterday that MAHB had failed to inform government officials that siting the terminal there would push up construction costs significantly, and called for action to be taken against the airport operator's top management.

Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat, who was transport minister when the move was first mooted in April 2008, has backed Pua's claims that MAHB made no mention of unsuitable soil conditions in KLIA West when proposing the new site.

MAHB has denied withholding crucial information from government officials, stressing that terminal was only shifted to its current location upon approval from all stakeholders.

Kong added today that Pua could refer to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) if he was unhappy about KLIA2's inflated cost.

"I am here not to protect any parties and if Tony Pua is not happy, he can refer the allegations to the PAC," he said.

MAHB had previously said that KLIA2's inflated cost, which has nearly doubled to RM3.9 billion from RM2 billion, was due to its decision to increase the terminal's capacity to 45 million passengers per annum (PPA) from 30 million.

This was done to accommodate budget carrier AirAsia's projections that 45.3 million passengers would be using the new low-cost carrier terminal by 2020, it said.

The airport operator also blamed the latest six-month delay to a change in baggage handling system (BHS), which it said had been requested by AirAsia.

But AirAsia has denied asking for a more powerful BHS or a larger terminal, noting that it had only asked MAHB to ensure KLIA2 could be expanded if needed.

KLIA2 will be the world's largest low-cost carrier terminal when it is completed in April 2013.

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