

Ministry pushing for more festive Sarawak flights

KUCHING : The Transport Ministry wants airlines to have more flights between Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak during festive seasons so that more Sarawakians can afford to fly home. Minister Anthony Loke said he had discussed this with the airlines after complaints from Sarawakians about high air fares during festive seasons. Increasing flight frequency , he said, would be more effective than using a ceiling price."We took into account the negative implications if we impose a ceiling price during festive seasons.This may cause average air fares to go up outside festive seasons," Loke told reporters after a courtesy call on Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg at Sarawak Legislative Assembly Complex here yesterday.

He said they wanted to try the different approach within the next one year by having more flights – during Chinese New Year , Hari Raya and Gawai – from Kuala Lumpur to Kuching, Sibul and Miri."We hope this will reduce air fares. I will ensure each airline, whether Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia or Malindo , increases flight frequency during festive seasons, he said. He also said Ministry looked forward to working with the state government to develop the air transport sector in Sarawak. This includes converting some rural air services into commercial routes by next year and improving airport facilities in the state for more efficient air services.

"Air travel is important in Sarawak , Malaysia's biggest state. If air transport is more efficient, I believe it can help Sarawak's economy development," he said.In addition ,he said the ministry would look into the possibility of having more direct international flights from Sarawak to destinations such as Indonesia and Australia, which would boost the state's tourism sector."I will discuss this with the airlines to see if they can implement these services,"he said.

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