

Firms offer to guarantee seats on Betong flights

Airline mulls ticket price subsidy plan

POST REPORTERS

Businesses in Betong's tourism sector will guarantee to fill 60 seats on every Nok Air flight bound for the newly-opened airport if the airline agrees to drop round-trip fares from Bangkok to 5,000 baht, the Betong Tourism Association said yesterday.

The association's vice-president, Narin Ruengwongsa, said tour operators have discussed the offer with the airline, which agreed to drop round-trip ticket prices to about 6,000 baht.

As those tickets now sell for around 7,000 baht, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) urged the airline to cover the 1,000-baht difference — a suggestion Nok Air has yet to approve.

Mr Narin said the TAT will discuss the issue further today. If the TAT manages to strike a deal with Nok Air, services to/from Betong will resume on May 2.

Nok Air services from Bangkok to Betong were suspended soon after it

was launched on March 14. The airline cited a lack of passenger interest as a reason for suspending services.

Separately, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon yesterday dismissed concerns about possible glitches in commercial operations at the airport, after it was reported that the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC) was looking for more money to help the Department of Airports (DoA) fund the airport's operations.

Gen Prawit, in his capacity as chair of a panel on the development of southern border provinces, insisted the airport is operational. He said operations won't be disrupted while the budget request is being sorted out.

He also said the transfer of Duangporn Suwanmanee, who served as Narathiwat airport director and Betong airport's acting director, to the Airports Standard Control Division will not affect operations.

Kornnit Sukkam, a transport specialist, was appointed as acting director of Betong Airport.

The DoA yesterday clarified Ms Duangporn's transfer, saying it had nothing to do with Nok Air's services at the airport.