



PHOTO: DUSIDA WORRACHADDEJCHAI

**The clock tower intersection at Betong, Yala.**

# Group eyes extra 6 months for subsidy

**DUSIDA WORRACHADDEJCHAI**

**T**he Association of Domestic Travel (ADT) is urging the government to extend the Tour Teaw Thai scheme, which offers a 40% subsidy on domestic tour packages, for a period of six months, focusing on four provinces in the South including the town of Betong to help sustain airline operations at its newly opened airport.

ADT president Thanapol Cheewarattanaporn said around 150,000 packages from a quota of 200,000 are expected to remain unsold when the scheme ends on April 30.

A complicated usage process has deterred tour operators and tourists

from utilising this stimulus package, he said.

The association wants to retain the measure for another six months, but with fewer restrictions. It suggests removing face scanning during trips to facilitate travel and generate more activity nationwide.

This move would be more useful for the tourism industry than simply returning the budget to the Finance Ministry, said Mr Thanapol.

He said 50,000 packages should be reserved for four southern provinces: Songkhla, Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala. The new airport in Betong is in Yala province.

The plan can help create more recognition and promotion for those areas,



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**THANAPOL CHEEWARATTANAPORN**  
PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATION OF DOMESTIC TRAVEL

said ADT.

Mr Thanapol said this is the right time for Betong to attract more demand as the area has several potential tourism attractions. The new airport can facilitate tourists reaching this destination.

Tour packages to Betong were among the most popular routes for the Tour Teaw Thai programme, particularly for the upcoming Songkran holiday, he said.

Without direct air transport, tourists have to fly to Hat Yai and then travel to Betong by car.

Mr Thanapol said tour packages to Betong cost around 7,500-8,000 baht if tourists use the subsidy scheme.

If Nok Air resumes flights to Betong, a package via air transport would cost around 15,000 baht, he said.

ADT, other tourism associations, the Tourism Authority of Thailand and Nok Air have arranged discussions about the plan to promote Betong with competitive ticket prices.

Mr Thanapol said operators would like Betong flights to resume from May, with round-trip airfares no higher than 5,000 baht including value-added tax and other fees. If these conditions are met, he said operators can help guarantee 75% of seat bookings on each flight.

"There is plenty of demand for Betong, but trips will not happen without a good marketing plan," said Mr Thanapol.