

**AVIATION**

# Nok Air seeks aid for flights to Betong, Nakhon Ratchasima

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Nok Air is calling for further assistance in terms of operational costs to sustain its flights to Betong and Nakhon Ratchasima.

Meanwhile, tourism operators aim to sell at least 2,500 packages for the Betong route over the next three months.

Nok Air chief executive Wutthiphum Jurangkool said the airline is still waiting for government support as it is studying the possibility of utilising Betong airport as a hub to connect to Hat Yai and Phuket.

International routes to Malaysia and Singapore are also included in the plan, particularly cargo services which could benefit from durian exports from Betong.

Nok Air officially called for fee waivers, such as the passenger service charge, landing and parking fees, to



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**WUTTHIPHUM JURANGKOOL**  
Chief executive, Nok Air

the Airports of Thailand which operates Don Mueang airport as well as navigation fees to the Aeronautical Radio of Thailand.

At present, only the Department of

Airports, which is in charge of Betong airport, granted an 80% reduction in landing and parking fees for the Betong-Bangkok (Don Mueang) route.

Mr Wutthiphum said the Finance Ministry should consider extending the excise tax on jet fuel at 0.2 baht a litre until the end of this year.

He said the plan to operate Nakhon Ratchasima-Chiang Mai flights from July also has to wait for state agencies to support the operation.

Recently, Nok Air and tourism operators signed a memorandum of understanding to revive Betong flights for three months from April 29.

Tourism operators formed the Go Betong consortium consisting of CCT Group, Tangmo Tour Co, Greenland Holiday, Merryland Travel Service and Meetawee Tour to support Betong tour packages.

He said tourism operators would occupy 60 of the 86 available seats per



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flight with an airfare of around 6,800 baht per person.

“Nok Air will operate the Betong route for three months without any cancellation. We expect the load factor to stay at 75%,” Mr Wutthiphum said.

Thanapol Cheewarattanaporn, managing director of Tangmo Tour, said tour packages had received positive feedback, especially from senior travellers who are seeking convenient travel.

Tourists from Malaysia and Singapore

could also help increase the level of traffic to Betong.

The number of tourists to Yala could reach 1 million in the next four years after the expansion, of which 60% would be Thais thanks to easier air travel.