



NLEX key to passenger hike in Clark Airport. The North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) is expected to play a major role in the realization of five million annual passenger target of the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) by the year 2010.

This was gleaned from a speech made before the Manila Bay Breakfast Club at the Casino Espanol recently by DMIA President Victor "Chichos" Luciano where he announced that Philtranco will use the NLEX more often than five times a day, its current frequency.

The airport's NLEX shuttle's pick up point is in Ortigas, Metro Manila, particularly at the back of SM Megamall. For P300, all a passenger has to do is sit back for an hour or two in seamless travel at the modern expressway, and enjoy the Philippine countryside scenery from or on their way to DMIA, formerly Clark International Airport, Luciano said.

Luciano disclosed that existing shuttle frequency and destinations will be expanded to include other major destinations in Metro Manila.

The airport chief expressed confidence in realizing the target of five million passengers as more foreign and local travelers, including OFWs, visit the Philippines through DMIA. Right now, a total of 110 weekly international flights transport 500,000 passengers yearly.

This momentum for increased traffic is brought about by "budget carriers" at DMIA. People can now fly international for as low as \$10, Luciano said emphasizing that these low cost carriers are not only a boon to the country's economic progress but also resolve social concerns of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) sector.

"We are actually saving marriages", Luciano stressed adding that OFWs who used to see their families once in a year or two, now visit their love ones even four or five times a year.

NLEX is an 84-kilometer highway from Balintawak, Quezon City to Sta. Ines, Mabalacat, Pampanga. The world class infrastructure covering over three regions and 21 provinces is managed by the Manila North Tollways Corporation (MNTC) and operated by the Tollways Management Corporation (TMC).

DMIA is dubbed as the premier gateway of the Philippines in the next 10 years. The former American facility is one of the biggest aviation complexes in Asia with its two 3.2 kilometer parallel runways that will be extended to four kilometers to accommodate new generation wide-bodied aircraft.

Air Asia, Asiana Airlines and Tiger Airways currently provide budget airfares to the growing passenger traffic composed of OFWs, businessmen and tourists.

Shanghai Airlines will soon join the roster of low cost carriers providing passenger and cargo flights to and from DMIA to various international destinations, mostly in Asia.

Before joining the government, Luciano was the president of Asiana Airlines, one of the pioneer carriers at the then Clark International Airport.