SONGSHAN AIRPORT STILL REQUIRED: PREMIER

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The demolition of Taipei International Airport (Songshan airport) should be premised upon Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport being upgraded and able to incorporate the capacity of the central Taipei airport, Premier Mao Chi-kuo said yesterday.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je said he plans to hold a seminar on the possible removal of Taipei International Airport next month and he has invited the three presidential candidates to join the discussion and reveal their stances on the matter.

Mao, asked about the plan by Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Huang Wei-che in the Legislative Yuan in Taipei yesterday, said Songshan airport, since its upgrade from a domestic airport to an international one in 2008, has been of great help to the development of the nation's civil aviation and tourism industries.

"The conditions for the removal of Songshan airport are the completion of the third runway and the third terminal at Taoyuan airport," Mao said.

"Taiwan's flights would be immediately affected if the conditions are not met to incorporate the capacity of the Taipei airport before it is removed," he said.

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Minister of Transportation and Communications Chen Jian-yu said the demolition of Songshan airport should only be considered in 2030, as it is now an important part of the Southeast Asian tour network and is responsible for transportation to the nation's outlying islands.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) presidential candidate Eric Chu said in Taoyuan yesterday that the short-term possibility of removing the airport is "very low," as it would first require the completion of the construction of the Taoyuan Aerotropolis and the transportation infrastructure of northern Taiwan.

DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen also said that there are conditions to be met before the discussion could take place - the capacity of Taoyuan airport, the operation of the Mass Rapid Transit line connecting Taipei and Taoyuan airport, and measures responding to national security needs.

"If the DPP returns to government next year, we will invite the Taipei City Government and the relevant authorities to have a thorough conversation about the matter, which should be a mid or long-term project, rather than something which can be solved immediately," Tsai said.

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