Sear Lien, 80, recounted memories of watching the old airport—then Pochentong International Airport—being built during his youth.

“From the beginning, I only used that airport. When I went to Vietnam, Laos, and France, I flew from there. But now they’ve built a new one. The old airport officially closes at midnight tonight.”

He supported keeping the old airport, suggesting it could still serve ASEAN dignitaries during major events or remain available for emergency landings.

The original airport was built by the French in 1957, officially inaugurated on January 19, 1959. Its terminal and control tower were designed by renowned French architect Pierre Dufau. In 1963, the VIP arrival pavilion, initially a lightweight steel-and-fabric structure designed by legendary Cambodian architect Vann Molyvann, was constructed. It was later rebuilt with reinforced concrete in 1966 to welcome French President Charles de Gaulle. The blade-like structure, designed by French engineer Guy Lemarchands, still stands and was used to receive VIP guests.