

Government should clarify air passengers' rights
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CH Ong

I refer to the letter AirAsia manipulating passengers. The complaint by 'Concerned Citizen' is not new.

There have been many complaints from Malaysian air travellers of delayed flights, which can lead to missed flights due to connection problems, and also of being bumped off from flights due to deliberate over-bookings by airlines.

Such complaints also include the question of inadequate or no compensation being offered. This is despite holding a paid and confirmed ticket, and checking in on time.

A few days ago, I read a news item about New Zealand air travellers also facing similar problems, but with a big difference. The New Zealand Consumer Affairs Minister promptly advised passengers that 'under the (New Zealand) civil aviation legislation, consumers are entitled to compensation from the airline if they are delayed - unless the delay is caused by factors beyond the airline's control such as weather conditions or safety issues'.

It was further clarified that 'airlines would be liable to pay compensation of up to 10 times their ticket price or the cost of the delay, whichever was the lesser', and that 'delay includes being bumped off on over-booked flights, and also covers flights that have been delayed or cancelled because of internal airline issues, such as rostering'.

The minister actually went further and said that the terms and conditions stated on the tickets and websites of Air New Zealand and Qantas were not in accordance with current legislation.

Obviously, the average Malaysian air traveller, just like the average New Zealand air traveller, won't be aware of his rights under whatever legislation governs air travel in Malaysia. I have yet to come across any clarification of such rights, if there should be any, by our relevant ministers, ie, the transport minister and the minister of domestic trade and consumer affairs.

It is about time these ministers of ours open their mouths and explain to Malaysian air travellers their rights (or lack of rights) to compensation should their flights be delayed, or if they get bumped off due to the airlines' fault.

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