

AirAsia: New terminal delayed by one year
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Budget carrier AirAsia said today it would move to a new low-cost terminal at Kuala Lumpur's international airport by March 2012, a year later than planned.

tony fernandes airasia jetstar dealBut AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes said he was "thrilled" with an agreement struck with Malaysia's airport authorities after a long-running battle over the design and facilities.

"We are very happy with the design, it has taken in a lot of our input," Fernandes told reporters.

"We think that with this, a large part of our battle to make Malaysia the biggest hub of Asia is over."

AirAsia, which was launched in 2001 with just two planes, is now the region's fourth-biggest carrier with 25 million passengers a year.

Fernandes said the current low-cost carrier terminal, which opened in 2006, had a capacity to handle 15 million passengers annually while the new terminal would have a capacity of 30 million.

"This can enable us to plan for the next 10 years," he said, adding that the bigger capacity meant the airline could revive some routes that had been terminated due to a lack of space at the current overcrowded terminal.

Parking bays for 76 planes

As part of the agreement with operators Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad there will be parking bays for 76 aircraft and AirAsia's headquarters will be located next to the terminal building.

"We haven't met the deadline we wanted but with the extra parking bays that we have been given, we're comfortable," Fernandes said.

"It's okay, we're excited. We will have a proper headquarters. It's a big step forward for AirAsia."

Like the current low-cost terminal, the new facility is not for AirAsia's exclusive use, and is open to other budget airlines.

Fernandes said that the routes likely to be revived were flights to Hat Yai in southern Thailand, and Palembang and Balikpapan in Indonesia.

He said the carrier also planned to introduce flights this year to the Maldives, where his Tune Hotel business has been invited to build six budget hotels.

- AFP

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