

MAHB kept extra cost of KLIA2 move from officials, Pua says
The Malaysian Insider
January 04, 2012
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 4 — Malaysia Airports (MAHB) failed to inform government officials that the cost of KLIA2 would almost double to RM3.9 billion as a result of shifting the new terminal from its original site to the current location, Tony Pua said today.

The DAP publicity chief pointed out that MAHB withheld this crucial information at a meeting on April 15, 2008, when the airport operator first mooted the current KLIA West site to transport, finance and home ministry officials.

This was despite the original KLIA Master Plan 1992 stating that soil conditions to the west had "poor bearing qualities and is not suitable for airport construction without undertaking significant engineering measures", Pua said.

"This issue which was highlighted in the original masterplan was not dealt with in the new masterplan...", he told reporters at DAP headquarters here today.

"I can only conclude that MAHB has intentionally chosen not to disclose this crucial information to the relevant ministry officials."

This resulted in a lack of objections to the move from KLIA North to KLIA West, which caused the cost of the new low-cost carrier terminal to bloat by nearly RM2 billion to RM3.9 billion, he said.

Pua also questioned MAHB's decision to shift sites, noting that the airport operator had confirmed the original spot as the best option available as late as July 6, 2007 in a presentation to the Finance Ministry.

Last month, the Petaling Jaya Utara MP estimated that earthworks undertaken to mitigate poor soil conditions at the new site accounted for about RM1.2 billion of the RM1.9 billion in additional cost so far incurred by KLIA2.

He had also pointed out the move to KLIA West meant a third runway had to be built for RM270 million, as well as a second control tower for RM500 million.

Pua also took the Transport Ministry to task today for entrusting decisions to MAHB without diligently monitoring the project, and urged Transport Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha to take action against the ministry officials involved in discussions on KLIA2.

He added that action must also be taken against the top management of MAHB for being "economical with the truth".

MAHB has said the inflated cost of KLIA2, which has nearly double to RM3.9 billion from RM2 billion, was due to its decision to increase the terminal's capacity to 45 million passengers per annum (PPA) from 30 million.

This was done to accommodate budget carrier AirAsia's projections that 45.3 million passengers would be using the new low-cost carrier terminal by 2020, it said.

The airport operator also blamed the latest six-month delay to a change in baggage handling system (BHS), which it said was requested by AirAsia.

But AirAsia has denied asking for a more powerful BHS or a larger terminal, noting that it had only asked MAHB to ensure KLIA2 could be expanded if needed.

KLIA2 will be the world's largest low-cost carrier terminal when it is completed in April 2013.

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