

AirAsia appeals to Najib to resolve klia2 issues
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By Lee Shi-Ian

Cracks on the tarmac and main buildings in klia2 are just part of the issues that needs to be resolved. - The Malaysian Insider pic, April 2, 2014. AirAsia has appealed for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to intervene to resolve issues over the move from the Low-Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) to the much delayed RM4 billion budget air terminal - klia2.

Chief executive officer Aireen Omar said AirAsia was more than ready to move to klia2 but it had to be done under the right circumstances.

"AirAsia will be the anchor tenant at klia2, accounting for more than 80% of the traffic at the new airport," she said in a statement today.

"klia2 has the potential to be a global aviation hub, similar to Dubai," she said, stressing that it was necessary for klia2 to be fully functional and operationally viable in the long term.

Aireen expressed confidence that AirAsia, as the largest low cost carrier in the region, could elevate Malaysia's aviation industry as a whole.

She said AirAsia should be given a chance to present its case as it was the main user of klia2.

"Based on previous media reports, it might be perceived that AirAsia is deliberately not moving to klia2 or purposely being difficult.

"But this is not our intention as there are many concerns about klia2, especially on functionality, safety and security."

"These issues are paramount to our staff working efficiently and for our passengers to have a seamless travel experience," Aireen (pic, right) said.

She stressed that AirAsia was doing its level best to resolve all the pending and pressing issues with Malaysia Airports Holding Berhad (MAHB).

However, she said there was a need for the regulator to be independent as other industries in Malaysia.

We believe it is crucial to ensure that remedial steps are undertaken prior to a transfer, which will mitigate risks relating to any potential aviation incidents

"We are ready and committed to make the best out of klia2 although it is not the design we wanted," Aireen said.

"Moreover, klia2 is no longer a fully low-cost carrier terminal which MAHB initially promised.

"As a regional hub player, AirAsia contributes immensely to the economy of the nation by the traffic brought into Kuala Lumpur through AirAsia's extensive network.

"This year, we expect to carry at least 24 million passengers via Kuala Lumpur, and with this size of operations, we have to ensure klia2 is fully functional without any possible interruptions."

Earlier today, AirAsia and AirAsia X had refused to move to klia2 until all the safety and security issues have been resolved.

AirAsia does not want to budge from the existing terminal known as the LCCT – which it has often referred to as the horse stable – despite warnings that it will be closed by May 9.

Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Kaprawi has said that klia2 would open as scheduled and the present LCCT would no longer be operational after May 9.

He also hoped that AirAsia would join the government authorities and four other airlines – Malindo Air, Cebu Airlines, Tiger Airways and Mandala Airlines – in the big move to klia2.

However, AirAsia and AirAsia X have stood firm and said that they would still be based at the current LCCT even after May 9.

AirAsia's contention is that there are safety and security issues that need to be addressed before they can move.

It was also concerned with potential rise in airport charges and passenger service charge, which could raise the overall cost of travelling and burden travellers.

AirAsia also cited the recent Ikram Premier Consultings' report, the findings of which revealed that there were depressions on the taxiway/apron and runway.

According to the Ikram report, these depressions would necessitate periodic remedial measures to be undertaken on relevant areas.

"This will prove to be operationally disruptive to a hub airline such as AirAsia Group which has about 400 aircraft movements in a day and at least 70 aircraft in its fleet in the LCCT."

"Last year alone, the group carried 22 million passengers via LCCT," AirAsia said yesterday in a statement.

"We believe it is crucial to ensure that remedial steps are undertaken prior to a transfer, which will mitigate risks relating to any potential aviation incidents," AirAsia said. – April 2, 2014.

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