

## **Who to blame for weekend chaos at LCCT?**

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Tiger is used to being patient and firmly believes that it is a virtue. But the chaos that passengers at the LCCT had to face on Sunday would likely have got on her nerves too. While the blame game remains in full swing, Tiger takes a hard look at the immigration department and suggests that it is time key players stop undermining each other and instead start cooperating with each other.

Tigers by nature tend to be patient creatures, we carefully identify our prey and then stalk it as we wait for the perfect opportunity to strike — which of course is then carried out with ruthless efficiency.

It helps that tigers are fast and strong of course, but patience is a crucial factor. So this cat knows a thing or two about the virtues of being patient, another attribute Tiger thinks too many humans lack.

But then again, Tiger practices patience towards a profitable end such as a hearty meal. When most Malaysians are called on to be patient, it is usually when they are stuck in some lengthy (and unnecessary) traffic jam or at some counter waiting to get attended to. So perhaps it is understandable that they find it harder to practice a little patience.

The latter happened again over the weekend, when a 1,000 or more passengers using the low cost carrier terminal (LCCT) were faced with lengthy delays as they waited to clear immigration checks and head to their flights.

Hearing the passenger accounts of the conditions they faced and the fact that some eventually missed their flights, even this Tiger has to admit that she probably would have struggled to stomach the wait.

But while mistakes happen, as do glitches — what always makes these situations more annoying for Malaysians is the perpetual blame game that follows. Even several days after the incident over the weekend, no one has been willing to put their paw up and say 'yes we made a mistake; we are sorry and are going to fix it'.

Worse still, everyone seems more eager to make the other guy look bad rather than work at it collectively.

For those unsure what this cat is roaring on about, allow Tiger to give you a quick recap. On Sunday over a 1,000 passengers travelling from the LCCT were stuck at immigration, some missing their flights. The issue was caused by the fact that there were too few immigration counters open to process foreigners and that there were no proper guides to lead passengers to the right counters resulting in a bottleneck situation.

This was made worse by the fact that the incident happened during peak hours, and in the hot conditions of the LCCT. One passenger compared the situation to hell, while others noted that people had fainted in the congestion.

No matter how you skin it, it was not a pleasant situation.

So what went wrong and who is to blame? Well it depends and differs on who you ask.

There are three parties which have to be looked at — the AirAsia group which is currently the only airline flying out of the LCCT; Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) the owner and operator of the LCCT and the Immigration Department which handles the immigration counters.

Out of the three, the AirAsia group was probably the least culpable of the lot. While most get the sense that the group have not been exactly the most cooperative partner in terms of working with MAHB to move to klia2, at times even appearing petty; the bottom line is the group can do very little in terms of keeping the immigration counters running and adequately staffed.

In response to questions by Malaysiakini over the incident, the immigration department director-general (D-G) Aloyah Mamat stated that the delays were AirAsia's fault. Among some of the more curious comments put forward were that the delay was caused because the group had refused to move to klia2 by May 2 like the other low cost carriers.

She said "a large portion of Immigration Department personnel have been deployed to klia2 and only a few international counters and four auto-gates for Malaysians are open at the LCCT... The Immigration Department cannot deploy many personnel at LCCT as all airlines, but AirAsia, have moved to klia2. AirAsia's refusal to move to klia2 (on May 2) is cause for the congestion."

Given that the airline's flights account for 90% or so of those heading out of the LCCT, it is surprising that the D-G feels that moving the majority of their staff to the new terminal was a logical thing to do.

In fact MAHB's own figures show that up until AirAsia moves operations to klia2, the new terminal will handle on average about 7,000 passengers. After the airline moves, the terminal expects to handle 50,000 passengers.

Furthermore, while it might have been much more convenient if the group had in fact moved to klia2 on the appointed date of May 2 — their insistence that they were not ready to do so and eventual acceptance to move by May 9 instead has been well reported.

So unless the good folks at the immigration department have been living under a rock — the initial comments made by the D-G sounds like there may be lesson here for AirAsia, looking to be taught.

At the very least it shows incompetent planning, at worst a seemingly vindictive motive.

The D-G later backtracked on her comments, and suggested that the department had divided its workforce into 60% for the LCCT and 40% for klia2. Tiger can only wonder which statement represents the actual fact.

That said even with giving the department the benefit of the doubt, the incompetence tag is hard to shake off.

For the sake of passengers who just want to get to where they need to go, Tiger hopes that this does not become a recurring trend at klia2.

In two days , the AirAsia group will move their sizeable operations to the new RM4 billion klia2. Clearly all is not well between the airline, MAHB and other players involved — unsurprising perhaps given the ongoing blame game over the klia2 issue.

But klia2 represents an opportunity for the expansion and growth of the country's aviation industry, in particular for the low cost carrier sector.

Tiger for one thinks it is high time the powers that be on both sides sit down, and find a way to rise above all the recent finger-pointing and pettiness.

GRRRRR!!!

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