

Chaos at low cost terminal AirAsia's doing, says immigration chief
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By Muzliza Mustafa

The Immigration Department said the chaotic situation at the arrival hall of the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) in Sepang yesterday was due to AirAsia's refusal to move to the new terminal.

Its director-general Datuk Aloyah Mamat said the airline's refusal to move to Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (klia2), which started operation on May 2, was the cause of the problem.

"The government had ordered klia2 to start operation on May 2 and LCCT to be closed. Several discussions were held with AirAsia on the matter but the low-cost carrier stood firm on its decision to only move to klia2 on May 9," Aloyah told The Malaysian Insider.

Some 1,000 passengers were stranded at the LCCT and waited for hours to go through the immigration as only a handful of counters were open. Many passengers took their frustration and anger to social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram.

Melodie Yap twitted is among those who posted video clips of the crowded terminal.

"OMG. What is wrong with LCCT? Doesn't mean that if klia2 is starting then you stop most of your services here at LCCT.

"No air conditioning, escalator is not working and there is not even a queue line for people to line up. People are quarrelling here also," wrote Yap of the scene in LCCT.

Another passenger, Tia B, using the Twitter handle @kriterxx, posted a photo of the long lines at Immigration, along with the status "Welcome to hell! #lcct #immigrationnightmares".

Aloyah said only few counters were open yesterday as most of the immigration department's resources and officers were redeployed to klia2 to ensure smooth operations at the new airport.

"Immigration Department could not allocate more officers to man the counters at LCCT as most were already transferred to klia2. Because of that only four autogates, and several counters at the International and Domestic Hall of LCCT were opened," said Aloyah.

She said more officers had to be deployed to klia2 because airlines have moved to the new airport except for AirAsia.

"The carrier's refusal to move on time was the cause of the overcrowding," she said.

The recently completed klia2 is built to accommodate 45 million passengers annually. It was initially set to open in September 2011, but finally opened last week after several delays.

The airport was also mired in controversy over safety issues and construction costs, which ballooned to RM4 billion from the initial RM1.6 billion.

AirAsia Bhd and its sister company AirAsia X Bhd had stood firm on their decision not to move to klia2 until safety issues were addressed.

The government requested the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to inspect the airport following complaints of depressions on the taxiway and runway.

The ICAO has given the green light for klia2 to start operations as scheduled. – May 5, 2014.

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