

**AirAsia Flight QZ8501 Asked For A Slight Deviation Before Losing Contact - ATC  
Bernama  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 28 (Bernama) -- The pilot of AirAsia Indonesia QZ8501 had contacted the Indonesian Air Traffic Control (ATC) to request for a slight deviation from the original flight path due to bad weather before losing contact.

The AirAsia flight QZ8501 which took off at 5.20am from Surabaya, Indonesia and scheduled to land at Singapore's Changi Airport at 8.30am, last contacted the ATC 6.12am (7.12am Malaysian time).

There were seven crew and 155 passengers on board the A320-200 aircraft, comprising 155 passengers and seven crew members made up of 159 Indonesians, 3 (south Korea) and one each from Singapore, Malaysia and France.

Indonesia's Air Transport Ministry director Djoko Murjatmojo who confirmed that the plane was missing in Indonesian airspace said the aircraft was flying at a height of 32,000 ft when the pilot requested for a deviation to the left, to avoid thick clouds.

He said the pilot had asked permission to climb to 38,000 ft (11,000m) to avoid thick clouds.

"At 6.17am contact was lost and at 6.18am only the flight plan or scheduled flight plan was visible. The aircraft was in good condition but the weather was bad at that moment," he told reporters during a press conference on Kompas TV that was also telecast by Astro Awani.

Djoko said the location of the flight when it lost contact was between Tanjung Pandan, Belitung and Pontianak.

Meanwhile, Bangka Belitung Search and Operations (SAR) chief Joni Superiadi said a SAR team had been sent to the location where the flight was reported missing.

According to Superiadi, five aircrafts are involved in the SAR.

AirAsia has established an Emergency Call Centre that is available for family or friends of those who may have been on board the aircraft. The number is: +622129850801.

According to the AsiaAsia portal, "At this time, search and rescue operations are being conducted under the guidance of The Indonesia of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). AirAsia Indonesia is cooperating fully and assisting the investigation in every possible way.

"The aircraft was on the submitted flight plan route and was requesting deviation due to enroute weather before communication with the aircraft was lost while it was still under

the control of the Indonesian Air Traffic Control (ATC)."

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