

AirAsia Indonesia Plane With 162 People Aboard Missing
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 28 (Bernama) -- An AirAsia Indonesia's plane with 162 people on board went missing en route from Surabaya to Singapore this morning.

The Airbus A320-200 aircraft lost contact with air traffic control at 7.24 am local time, according to AirAsia's official Facebook and Twitter pages.

On board the missing Flight QZ8501 were 155 passengers, comprising 138 adults, 16 children and an infant.

In a statement, AirAsia said the plane had two pilots and five cabin crew, comprising four flight attendants and an engineer.

"At this time, search and rescue operations are being conducted under the guidance of the Indonesian Civil Aviation Authority," it said.

AirAsia Indonesia, it said, was cooperating fully and assisting the investigation in every possible way.

Those on board the plane, with registration number PK-AXC, were 156 Indonesians, three South Koreans, one Singaporean, one Malaysian and a French national.

The AirAsia statement said the aircraft was on the submitted flight plan route and was requesting to deviate from the planned flight route due to weather before it lost communication with the Indonesian Air Traffic Control.

The flight took off from Juanda International Airport in Surabaya at 5.35 am local time.

AirAsia said the captain in command had a total of 6,100 flying hours and the first officer, a total of 2,275 flying hours.

The plane underwent its last scheduled maintenance on Nov 16, 2014, the aviation company said.

In an immediate reaction, AirAsia group chief executive officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes said: "Thank you for all your thoughts and prayers, we must stay strong."

Meanwhile, European aircraft maker Airbus said it had been "informed of an event" and all efforts were now going towards assessing the situation.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said Malaysian transport officials were in contact with their counterparts in Indonesia and Singapore.

"We stand ready to offer any assistance," he said in a statement. AirAsia Indonesia operates from five hubs, namely Jakarta, Bandung, Bali, Surabaya and Medan.

It currently operates a fleet of 30 Airbus A320s, according to the AirAsia website.

AirAsia Indonesia was established on Dec 8, 2004 through a joint venture between AirAsia International Ltd and PT Awair International. AirAsia Indonesia was initially known as Awair before it officially changed name on Sept 9, 2005.

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