

AirAsia – Now Everyone Can Fly

Fifty disabled persons gathered at the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) at KLIA to protest against the discriminatory policy imposed by AirAsia to refuse carriage for people who cannot walk. The demonstration was organised by the Barrier-Free Environment and Accessible Transport Group (BEAT) which comprises 18 NGOs representing an estimated 10,000 disabled persons in Malaysia. People who need special assistance are barred from booking with AirAsia online. Purchasers were asked to declare if they needed special assistance and if needed they were barred from booking tickets online with Air Asia and were instructed to book through the call centre. Representatives at AirAsia's call centre would refuse to sell tickets to people who cannot walk – admitting that it was the budget airline's company policy to refuse carriage to persons who cannot walk and climb up the stairs to the plane.

Disabled persons want equal access to fly with AirAsia. We should not be denied service based on our physical conditions. The reason given was that the airline lacks manpower to assist those with reduced mobility. Instead of giving that excuse AirAsia should make arrangements to increase its staff strength for flights booked by passengers who have informed the airline of their need for mobility assistance. In the press statement issued after the protest, BEAT called on Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi to eliminate all forms of discriminatory practices such as those committed by AirAsia and to protect the rights and dignity of disabled persons in Malaysia. We have been marginalised, ignored and discriminated against for far too long. We also hope AirAsia will seriously reconsider removing the unfair conditions imposed upon disabled persons desiring to fly with it.

<http://www.petertan.com/blog/2007/07/15/air-asia-now-everyone-can-fly-betulkah/#content>

BEAT's PRESS STATEMENTS ON AIRASIA'S REFUSAL TO TAKE PASSENGERS WHO REQUIRE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO BOARD AIRCRAFT

DATE : 15TH JULY, 2007, SUNDAY, 11 AM AT LCCT

We, members of Barrier-free Environment and Accessible Transport Group (BEAT), are gathered here this morning, to express our outrage and disappointment with AirAsia, for its refusal to take passengers who require special assistance to board the aircraft.

In AirAsia's Terms and Conditions, it states :-

1. AirAsia is unable to accept passengers who are completely immobile
2. As access to our aircraft is by the boarding stairs, the carriage of persons with limited mobility is subject to whether they are able to climb the boarding stairs unaided or aided.
3. A passenger who is able to walk up the boarding steps unaided may travel without a carer.
4. If the passenger is unable to climb the boarding stairs without any assistance, then AirAsia will request that the passenger travels with a carer.

We find AirAsia's terms and conditions blatantly discriminating, unfair and unacceptable !! A check with AirAsia Call Centre confirms that only those who DO NOT require special assistance to climb the boarding stairs are allowed to travel in AirAsia. These terms and conditions have denied disabled passengers and persons with limited mobility, their right to fly like everyone else !! These terms and conditions imposed by AirAsia has caused further inconvenience and hardship to them.

The freedom to fly should be applicable to EVERYONE including passengers who are immobile and persons with limited mobility who may travel unaccompanied but require assistance to go onboard the aircraft.

AirAsia, Asia's leading and largest low fare airline, has failed to live up to its slogan "Now Everyone Can Fly". It is obvious that "Now Not Everyone Can Fly" and "Now Not Everyone Is Allowed To Fly in AirAsia".

AirAsia has failed in its responsibility and obligation to provide facilities and services without discrimination, harassment and vilification of its passengers.

We are here to reaffirm our commitment to fight any form of discrimination against disabled persons !! Discrimination against any person on the basis of one's physical condition is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person.

We are here to demand that AirAsia reviews its policies and takes reasonable steps to ensure that the facilities and services provided and the terms on which they are provided are non discriminatory !!

The provision of such facilities not only benefit disabled passengers but also senior

citizens and international tourists who are wheelchair users and their family members who may choose Malaysia as their holiday destination. Besides this, it also further enhance the corporate

We also call on Malaysia Airports Berhad to make sure that all new and old airports be equipped with facilities to improve accessibility to disabled passengers.

We are deeply concerned that despite assurances from relevant authorities and Ministers, disabled persons continue to face barriers and discrimination in their everyday life.

Come this 31st August, Malaysians from all walks of life will be celebrating our country's 50th year of independence. But disabled persons here are still struggling to understand and experience the meaning of independence.

We have internationally well known mega development projects called Southern Corridors, Northern Corridors, Eastern Corridors, etc, etc, but disabled persons are still struggling to get out of their house corridors !!

We have RapidKL which has launched 1200 new buses on the roads but none of these are accessible buses. Despite our appeals, Prasarana, a 100% government owned company, continues to purchase and launch non-accessible buses ! We have newly launched taxis which cannot take wheelchair passengers due to limited booth space filled with gas tank !

We have light rail transit system called STAR Line or Ampang Line and Monorail but are completely inaccessible ! Now, we have AirAsia, which has done the nation proud by being the fastest growing and largest low fare airline in the region, refusing to take passengers who are immobile requiring assistance to go onboard !

We call upon YAB Dato Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, as Prime Minister of Malaysia, to hear our cries and consider our pleas for full inclusion in the overall Masterplan and Masterpolicy of the country. We ask to be treated with the same dignity and respect as equal members of society and full citizens of the country.

We also urge our Prime Minister to review the proposed Disabled Persons Act and to endorse the " UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" to protect and guarantee disabled persons the same rights as other persons and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against them.

Thank you.

Christine Lee
BEAT Coordinator

V. Murugeswaran
BEAT Assistant Coordinator

Peter Tan
BEAT Assistant Coordinator

Barrier-Free Environment and Accessible Transport Group (BEAT) comprises 18 Organisations as listed below :-

- Persatuan Damai Orang-Orang Kurang Upaya Selangor & W.P
- Malaysian Spinal Injuries Association
- Persatuan Mobiliti Selangor & Kuala Lumpur
- Persatuan Orang-Orang Cacat Anggota Malaysia
- Society of the Blind in Malaysia
- Malaysian Association for the Blind
- Society of the Chinese Disabled Persons Malaysia
- Persatuan Kristian Shuang Fu untuk orang Kurang Upaya Kuala Lumpur
- Beautiful Gate Foundation for The Disabled
- Persatuan Pemulihan Orang Cacat Selangor & Wilayah Persekutuan
- Selangor Cheshire Home
- Malaysian Information Network on Disabilities
- Dignity & Services
- United Voice (Self-Advocacy Society of Persons with Learning Disabilities Selangor & Kuala Lumpur)
- Selangor Council for Welfare and Social Development
- Majlis Paralimpik Malaysia
- Malaysian Council For Rehabilitation
- Lovely Home

<http://www.petertan.com/blog/2007/07/16/beats-press-statements-on-airasia%E2%80%99s-refusal-to-take-passengers-who-require-special-assistance-to-board-aircraft/#content>

Disabled guests traveling with AirAsia will now be able to fly with greater ease with the airline's newly acquired ambulifts. The airline is placing one ambulift in its LCC Terminal hub (Kuala Lumpur) and another in its Kota Kinabalu hub. Previously, disabled travellers would need the assistance of AirAsia's ground staff to physically carry them onboard the aircraft. To help ease the difficulties faced by disabled travellers, the low cost carrier has purchased the ambulifts which will be used to transport the disabled guests directly from the ground to the aircraft and vice-versa. In addition, the airline has acquired aisle wheelchairs to be used with the ambulifts and onboard the aircraft. For extra support, AirAsia's in-flight lavatories are already equipped with special built-in handles for disabled guests.

Tony Fernandes of AirAsia, said, "It is great to finally see that our disabled friends are able to fly with us more comfortably today with the assistance of the ambulifts and aisle wheelchairs. After understanding the needs of our disabled friends, we have also enhanced our booking system to enable everyone including our disabled friends to now enjoy low fares when they log into our website.

"As a low cost carrier, we acknowledge that there are certain limitations on our end with the services that we can offer but we will enhance our services and accessibility where possible and we hope to set the example for other LCCs to work towards an improved environment for our disabled guests in terms of enhanced amenities for greater mobility and comfort. Although we proactively acquired our very own ambulifts, we look forward for support from the airports to improve the total experience for disabled guests including leveled walkways, designated car parks, amongst others."

Christine Lee, Coordinator of the Barrier-Free Environment and Accessible Transport Group (BEAT) said, "We applaud AirAsia for taking responsible and proper steps to enhance its facilities and services to cater to the diverse needs of the traveling public, including disabled travelers. These new facilities and services are a positive reflection that AirAsia as a leading budget airline is serious in its effort to make air travel more accessible and inclusive of everyone. This in the end shows that Air Asia is consistent with its tagline 'Now Everyone Can Fly'."

"We are also happy that AirAsia, together with BEAT's resource team comprising of disabled people themselves have introduced "Disability Equality Training" for its cabin crew and staff to give them a better understanding of "disability" issues as well as tips on

how to relate and how to assist disabled passengers,” added Christine.

There are, however certain restrictions that remain. AirAsia only allows a maximum of four disabled passengers per flight. Out of the four, the airline can accommodate up to two seats for quadraplegic passengers. Disabled travellers requiring special assistance must contact AirAsia’s Call Centre at least 48 hours before the scheduled flight departure date to make prior arrangement with the airline for the type of assistance required.

Disabled passengers may also be required to travel with a companion if :

- It is essential for safety; or
- The passenger is unable to assist in his own evacuation from the aircraft; or
- The passenger is unable to understand safety instructions.

<http://www.asiatraveltips.com/news08/164-DisabledTravellers.shtml>

Guests with reduced mobility (Wheelchair / ambulift assistance)

We want to serve our guests the best we can. To ensure we understand your needs, kindly contact us via Live Chat or call our call center after booking your flight and at least 48 hours prior to your scheduled time of departure.

We do not accept battery operated wheelchair or mobility devices. Under certain circumstances, carriage of battery operated wheelchair or mobility devices might be accepted subject to removal of the battery (by passengers) and that maximum weight allowed for the wheelchair or mobility device is 85kg.

There will be no charge for checked-in wheelchair, though the assistance provided is chargeable. Wheelchair service for all AirAsia X flights (D7) is provided free of charge.

<http://www.airasia.com/au/en/at-the-airport/special-guests.page>

AirAsia launches ambulift for disabled passengers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f21TZmzANco>