

Penang International Airport Smoking Lounge

Introduction

A meeting was organized between CMTM and Encik Azmi Murad, Airport Manager of the Penang International Airport at Bayan Lepas Penang on February 2, 1998. This follows a request from Encik Azmi for industry's assistance in dressing-up the newly created smoking lounge, located at the departure lounge of the airport. Encik Azmi was put in touch with industry following a meeting between CMTM and Dato Khairuddin Ibrahim, Managing Director of Malaysia Airports Berhad, on the issue of smoking areas at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport at Subang, Kuala Lumpur.

The earlier plan was to set up proper smoking lounges at Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah airport Subang so as to put a foot in door for a similar arrangement at the KLIA in Sepang. However, as MAB has given us inroads for such an arrangement for KLIA, they had wished for industry to dress-up the smoking lounge at the Penang airport. MAB's plan is to use the Penang smoking lounge as a blue-print for all other international / domestic airports in Malaysia.

Penang Smoking Lounge

The above lounge is located in the departure hall, past security / boarding pass checkpoint. Only one such lounge is available, on the left-hand side outside the passengers holding area. It is in the same area as several newly set-up duty-free shops. There is only one - way exit, meaning that once you have passed the security / boarding pass checkpoint, you cannot come back in again. However, passengers on arrival through the left-hand-side aerobridges can stop by for a smoke. It is obstructed by view if you arrive through the aerobridges on the right-hand side. There are no visible signages to indicate the room except when you are within proximity of the room itself.

The room is partitioned with half-glass and half gypsum-board. It is air-conditioned and measures 15ft X 12ft. It has two ventilation extractor fans. There are two standing ashtrays and about 10 seats, no different to that of the smoking room at Subang airport. It is bare, empty and unwelcoming, not to mention unpleasant.

Given that this room is only good for passengers, industry inquired about the other smoking patrons at the airport. Apparently, the Penang airport authorities are planning for a major renovation exercise which should take place in the middle of the year. A request was made for the authorities to consider another smoking lounge in the main concourse of the airport for passengers yet to check in and for the general public sending and picking up passengers. This was well received by the Airport Manager, who said that it was in their plan.

Recommendation

Since the airport authorities have willingly invited us to work with them, industry should take full advantage of the opportunity. While cost is a major consideration as there are several airports of similar size to consider, we need to look at what has been done by both BAT and PMI in this area. We have to develop our own parameters in terms of how elaborate we wish these lounges to be.

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Once we have clear instructions and specifications of the other sources developed by LUI, DAT and PMI, we can contract a local interior design company to undertake the project on a packaged contract. This is to enjoy economies of scale.

Further, we need to look at a maintenance contract. It is my view that we should be looking at a one-off investment as opposed to an investment of a recurring nature. Let the cleaning be handled by the Penang airport authorities as industry can neither afford the time nor manpower to check on the contractor's work.

To date, no official commitment has been made to the Penang airport authorities. Approval from the Board will be first obtained before any financial commitments are made. Industry is currently awaiting information and pictures from MTC and PMA Inc.

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