



Two-airport solution in Bangkok: letter from the Director General of IATA to the Minister of Transport of Thailand, Mr Sapon Zarum

Geneva, 2 November 2009

Dear Minister Zarum,

I would like to bring to your attention an issue of grave concern to the airlines operating in Thailand. We have noted the recent proposal from the government for a two-airport solution in Bangkok and request your urgent intervention on the issue.

IATA is of the firm opinion that a one-airport solution is in the best interests of the passengers, airlines and the overall economy of Thailand. Bangkok serves as the gateway to Thailand and is a critical transit hub for international and domestic travelers. Splitting airline operations between two airports will no doubt result in increased passenger inconvenience for those travelers that fly into one airport and out of the other. Also, two airports will result in duplication of investment – in airline, airport and Aerothai resources – leading to increased costs for airlines and passengers. Both these factors will have a detrimental impact on the sustainability and viability of airline operations into Thailand.

We are aware that Suvarnabhumi is operating close to its stated capacity of 45 million passengers. Rather than divert limited resources to Don Muang, all efforts should be undertaken to optimize and expand the capacity of Suvarnabhumi. In this regard, we fully support your Government's initiative for a new domestic terminal that will increase Suvarnabhumi's capacity to 65 million passengers by 2013. In the interim, all stakeholders need to work together to enhance and ensure maximum utilization of the current facilities. The present slowdown in aviation traffic provides an added incentive and also a window of opportunity for this effort.

Accordingly, I urge the Thai Government to reconsider the proposal to operate two commercial airports in Bangkok. Suvarnabhumi should be the sole commercial airport in Bangkok while the existing facilities at Don Muang are used for general aviation and non-scheduled traffic. Aviation is an integral aspect of the travel and tourism industry and according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (TSA Research 2008), travel and tourism contributes US\$38 billion to GDP and provide for four million jobs in Thailand. Your leadership is essential to ensure that the operating environment in Thailand continues to allow airlines to sustain and grow for the benefit of the overall Thai economy.

IATA, along with the local Board of Airline Representatives and the Airport Operators' Committee, is ready and willing to work with the Thai government on this matter. I hope to meet you on my next visit to Bangkok and do let me know if you are planning to visit Geneva in the near future. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me or the IATA team if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Giovanni Bisignani
Director General and CEO
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