

Airlines Doing Their Bit To Get The Voters Going

PETALING JAYA : Amid grumblings about surging airfares during the 15th General Election (GE15), airlines are offering discounts and increasing the frequency of flights to meet the increase in demand.

To facilitate voter movement for the Nov 19 polls, Malaysia Airlines is offering 20% discounted fares as part of its Jom Balik Mengundi (Let's Go Back to Vote) campaign.

The campaign offers prices from RM104 (one-way) all-in fares for bookings until Nov 19, for travel from Nov 11 to Nov 27.

The national carrier said the campaign is to facilitate the movement of Malaysian voters, including intra- Sarawak and Sabah for GE15.

“Since the campaign launch on Oct 20, we have seen a 15% increase in bookings on Malaysia Airlines over our daily average, with approximately 36,000 passenger bookings,” said the airlines in a statement to The Star yesterday.

Malaysia Airlines will also operate 26 additional flights and upgrade up to 22 return flights to wide-body service using its A330 aircraft to the peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak.

“The aircraft upgrade will be utilised for selected routes such as Kuala Lumpur-Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur-Kuching and Kuala Lumpur-Penang to accommodate the surge in demand in these sectors.

“Additionally, Malaysia Airlines plans to further increase flight capacity to certain sectors where possible on Nov 18 and 20,” the airlines said.

On the campaign, Malaysia Airlines added that the 20% discount promotion is applicable on all fare categories and is available for booking via malaysiaairlines.com.

Meanwhile, Batik Air, formerly known as Malindo Air, said Malaysians can redeem their RM50 evouchers to purchase domestic flight tickets online until the end of this year.

Batik Air public relations and government affairs director Raja Sa'adi Raja Amrin said the RM50 evoucher is part of the government's Stimulus Recovery Plan (PRE 2.0), an initiative to maintain the momentum of domestic tourism.

“The evoucher is still valid for domestic flights in Malaysia booked between July 7 and Dec 31 for the travel period between July 21 and March 31, 2023.

“Our fares are always very competitive and based on market demand,” said Raja Sa’adi when contacted yesterday.

The airline is also mounting 18 additional flights a day to meet the travel demand between Nov 5 and Nov 23 for domestic destinations such as Kuala Terengganu, Johor Bahru, Kota Baru, Langkawi, Penang, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu.

Batik Air chief executive officer Captain Mushafiz Mustafa Bakri said the additional flights were being offered on selected popular destinations for GE15 to help ease the anxiety of Malaysians returning to their hometowns to cast their votes.

“We are expecting a significant surge in domestic flight movements.

“Our extra flights will certainly provide better convenience to Malaysians who are unsure of returning home due to the expected heavy traffic during the general election exodus,” he said in a statement.

On Oct 30, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong welcomed efforts by airlines to increase their flight frequencies during the GE15 period.

He also requested the Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom) to allow late night flights during the general election.

He said this would help those planning to return home to vote as well as ease flight traffic and operations.

Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB) has announced a special Keluarga Malaysia (Malaysian Family) train service to the east coast as well as eight additional ETS services in conjunction with the GE15 from Nov 18 to 20.

“The special train will depart at 3.40pm (Nov 18) from KL Sentral Station and is expected to arrive at 7.40am (Nov 19) at Tumpat while the train from Tumpat will depart at 5.10pm (Nov 20) and arrive at 11.26am (Nov 21),” said KTMB in a statement yesterday.

Additional ETS train services from KL Sentral Station to Padang Besar Station and vice versa as well as Butterworth Station to KL Sentral Station are also provided for the same dates.

A total of 716 tickets are being offered for the special train services and 2,520 tickets for ETS train service, with sales having started yesterday (Nov 1) at 2pm.

According to KTMB, the initiative is to facilitate those returning to their respective states to fulfil their responsibilities as voters in the general election.

Tickets can be obtained through KTM Mobile application (KITS) or the KTMB website.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) is urging the government to declare a holiday on Nov 19 to allow people from all industries to exercise their voting rights.

Its president Mohd Effendy Abdul Ghani said that it will be difficult for those in certain industries which are service driven to go out and vote.

“If they are those working in airports or other services, the employers will have to make arrangements to ensure that their employees are able to take turns to go out and vote if they are working.

“As for those whose voting stations are far away, employers must allow them to go back and exercise their right.

“I think it will be at the discretion of the management to allow some time off for the employees to go out and vote, which can be rotated among all the staff working on polling day. This will be the best solution for certain industries which have to run operations on the day,” he told The Star yesterday.

He added so far, no unions have raised complaints about being denied to vote by their respective employers.

Mohd Effendy also stressed no employers can deny any employee from voting in the elections.

Earlier, Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed Hussin Syed Husman had said that employers who do not observe Nov 19, which falls on a Saturday, as a day off, must grant reasonable paid time off to their workers who are registered voters to cast their ballots.

For employees who are postal voters, he said reasonable time off should be granted to those working on that day to enable them to cast their postal votes.

Under Section 25 of the Election Offences Act 1954, employers are obliged to allow their employees who are registered voters a reasonable period of paid time off for voting.

Any employer who, directly or indirectly, refuses, or by intimidation, undue influence, or in any other manner, interferes with the granting his employee a reasonable period for voting, shall on summary conviction be liable to a fine of five thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for one year.

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