

KLIA aerotrain needs complete reset, says transport expert

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PETALING JAYA: A month-long action plan to fix the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) aerotrain of its systemic disruptions does not guarantee a long-term solution.

Feasibility and systemic issues require more than a month for review, while the whole system needs a reset, says a transport expert.

For the action plan to work, Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) should "reset" the new aerotrain system, instead of continuing with the old system, said

Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua from the Engineering Faculty of Universiti Putra Malaysia.

He warned if the action plan failed, KLIA would become a "technologically advanced but operationally sub-standard" airport.

"The aerotrain operators have already invested in a large-scale replacement programme of the system worth RM456mil, involving the adoption of Alstom Innovia APM trains and a communications-based train control (CBTC) system.

"The various Innovia systems developed by Alstom have been extensively used at several airports, including Dubai, Heathrow,

and Jeddah Airport. If correctly implemented with the installation, integration and maintenance of the system, there will be high reliability," said Law.

He said the recurring disruptions may "indicate systemic issues because various systems are incorporated into the project".

"People-mover systems tend to be complex and could experience catastrophic failures if issues related to signalling, power distribution, vehicles, software and even sensor alignment are not perfected."

He said the Dubai International Airport is also using the Innovia solutions.

"It is operating with incredible success and high levels of system uptime, with a level of performance of over 99.87% and over millions of kilometres of service life."

"The SkyLine people-mover at Frankfurt Airport, which is widely regarded as the best people-mover system in the world, uses similar APM technologies.

"This is also true of Changi Airport's Skytrain in Singapore, the Hong Kong International Airport's automatic people-mover system, and the Plane Train people-mover system found within the Atlanta Airport," said Law.

He said KLIA's global ranking

will finally depend not on the system but on its performance and the level of its maintenance, and whether the issue of flaws is treated seriously.

"If the action plan to put the aerotrain right is implemented successfully, KLIA will be able to enter the level of reputable airports and people movers," said Law.

Besides KLIA, other airports with an "aerotrain" system include Washington Dulles International Airport, which has an automated people mover also referred to as AeroTrain and the Mexico City International Airport's Aerotren.