

## Thai AirAsia apologizes after shuttle bus mix-up strands 23 passengers

- A Monitor Desk Report

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**Dhaka: Thai AirAsia has issued a formal apology after a ground-handling lapse at Bangkok's Don Mueang International Airport left 23 passengers stranded on a shuttle bus while their aircraft prepared for departure.**

The incident occurred on January 17, involving flight FD3116 from Don Mueang to Hat Yai, scheduled to depart at 07:10 local time (LT) with 136 passengers onboard.

Passenger accounts shared on social media said the situation came to light when an elderly woman noticed her travel companion was missing after boarding the aircraft. The woman alerted the cabin crew as the aircraft began taxiing for departure.

Initially, cabin crew reportedly suggested the missing passenger may

have missed the flight or boarded the wrong shuttle bus, as two gates were operating simultaneously at the time.

The situation escalated when the woman contacted her friend by phone and confirmed that not only her companion but also 22 other passengers were still inside a shuttle bus with its doors closed.

Following the revelation, the flight crew decided to return the aircraft to its parking position at around 07:45 LT. The stranded passengers were then released from the bus and boarded the aircraft, resulting in a 36-minute delay. The flight, later, departed and arrived in Hat Yai safely, according to the airline.

The incident raised concerns over multiple operational failures, including the absence of a passenger headcount before departure, inadequate communication between ground staff and cabin crew, and the lack of follow-up despite the affected passengers having completed check-in.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) confirmed the regulator received a formal passenger complaint on January 29, prompting an investigation into the airline's boarding and coordination procedures.

In a statement, Thai AirAsia attributed the incident to "coordination and communication errors between staff" and said it has questioned the employees involved and taken action in line with company regulations.

The airline also told CAAT it will tighten procedures by requiring cabin crew, in addition to ground staff, to conduct a final headcount before pushback on flights using bus gates, while revamping its internal communication systems.

CAAT deputy director-general Saran Benjanirat said the incident highlighted the need for strict coordination in all ground-service operations.

Passengers involved praised the elderly woman for raising the alarm, crediting her with ensuring all 23 stranded travelers were able to board the flight.