

TRAVEL CONSUMER DAILY

Wednesday, August 5, 2009

Corrupt Bali airport staff avoid jail

CORRUPT immigration officials at Bali airport have escaped criminal charges, following an investigation into alleged embezzlement.

The 44 immigration officers had been under investigation for embezzling an estimated three million Rupieahs (US\$294,000) in visa fees between October 2008 and May 2009, the *Bali Update* newsletter reports.



National newspaper *Kompas* reported that the Immigration Department had decided to limit punishments to only disciplinary and administrative sanctions. The Director General of Im-

migration, Basyir Ahmad Barmawi, told the 44 officers that they were "all considered like children or younger brothers and sisters whose mistakes can be remedied."

Following an investiga-

tion by the State Audit Board (BPK), the offending officer were demoted and ordered to repay the missing money, which varied between \$US6800 and \$US9800 per officer. Investigators concluded that the officers had embezzled visa fees by handing over only a \$US10 fee for a 7-day visa after they had collected \$US25 for a 30-day visa from arriving tourists. About 20,000 foreign tourists were duped.

In Jakarta the Minister of Law and Human Rights called on the BPK to audit all of Indonesia's national air gateways, admitting that it was possible that similar violations had occurred in other places.

QANTAS.COM TURNS ON TURBO

AUSTRALIA's biggest online travel retailer, which also happens to be the shopfront for the country's biggest airline, is renewing its push to grab more of the business it has sent to travel agents until now, with the "relaunch" of qantas.com.

Qantas has enhanced functionality on the website to allow more one-stop shopping for more parts of the travel experience and displacing more of the functions that consumers traditionally have turned to agents for.

Sales boss Rob Gurney, Group Executive Qantas Airlines Commercial, said qantas.com was now an advanced interactive travel site offering customers the ability to research and manage their travel arrangements.

"Now 10 years old, qantas.com attracts an average 7.5 million visits every month. It has grown from a site purely to book flights to one where customers can quickly and easily plan, book and manage all their leisure or business travel requirements online," Mr Gurney said.

"Each year we see more and

more customers choosing to interact with us through qantas.com. Increased experience with, and confidence in, what the internet can offer, means customers in the online travel space have greater expectations than ever. As a result, demand has developed for 24-hour 'self managed' travel services.

"Our research told us customers wanted the ability to book an entire holiday online or to self-manage their travel experience via the internet, including being able to check in and select their seat before they even leave for the airport.

"To meet these expectations, our customers can now book flights, hotels, holiday packages, cars, activities and show tickets online any time of the day. They can check in or change bookings and choose their seat online or check their flight status from their mobile devices on their way to the airport via qantas.com.

"Through the Frequent Flyer application on qantas.com, our customers can log their travel preferences so we know, each time they fly,

Our research told us customers wanted the ability to book an entire holiday online

ROB GURNEY



where they would prefer to sit in the aircraft or what their specific needs are. We are noticing more and more customers log in to this page to access their bookings, check their points status, make redemption bookings, claim missing points and access member specials."

Mr Gurney said Qantas had made over 20 new products and services available on qantas.com in the last 12 months. These included *Travel Insider*, Qantas' interactive online travel guide that provided articles and information from *Qantas*

The Australian Way inflight magazine and travel experts.

"*Travel Insider* has been extremely well received by our customers. We also have a 'qf-travelinsider' Twitter account with over 2500 followers and next month we will launch a *Travel Insider* Facebook application, further increasing its reach. Customers clearly value the reviews, tips and advice provided by our frequent flyer members, pilots and cabin crew, our travel experts and the really well travelled," Mr Gurney said.

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QANTAS.COM UPS TURBO

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"More recent developments means customers can sign up to RSS feeds from qantas.com to be alerted to flight specials as soon as they are available and business travellers now track their monthly travel spend by signing up to free monthly business travel reports."

Mr Gurney said new online services and product enhancements included

international online check-in; the ability to compare quotes between Australia's leading four car hire companies (Avis, Budget, Hertz and Thrifty); flights to over 100 international destinations including codeshare and inter-line partners; access to one-world round-the-world fares booking facility; purchase of holiday activities, experiences and tickets to shows and events; enhancements to qantas.com/mobile to deliver the latest information direct to mobile devices such as the Apple iPhone and BlackBerry, including real time flight arrivals and departures, worldwide flight timetables and login facilities to view bookings; Qantas Travel Insider; the removal of domestic hotel booking fees, meaning customers can book all their travel requirements, including flights, hotels, cars, holiday packages and insurance without any additional booking fees.

Qantas.com is available in seven languages.

JQ claims best check-in tech

JETSTAR says it will use "world first" technology to introduce boarding passes via mobile phone text message (SMS) and 24-hour "pre-enrolment check-in" prior to the end of the year.

Jetstar passengers who use web check-in for Australian domestic flights will soon be given the option to have their boarding pass and unique boarding code sent to their mobile phone via a standard text message.

Jetstar says that, unlike some other airlines that have introduced this technology to WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) or internet-enabled handsets, any mobile phone will be able to accept the Jetstar boarding pass via the common text message.

Jetstar plans to also introduce 24-hour automatic check-in to enhance the breakthrough.

This will allow customers who purchase fares via Jetstar.com to request at the time of booking that the airline automatically check the passenger(s) in 24 hours prior to their Jetstar flight departure, with the boarding pass then sent via email or text message.

The SMS technology has been developed by Melbourne-based company Sissit Group with which Jetstar has a research and development arrangement.

The new SMS boarding system will initially be trialed at Melbourne Avalon Airport with an anticipated Jetstar Australian domestic network-

wide roll out by year's end if the technology proves successful.

Jetstar Chief Executive Officer Bruce Buchanan said the technologies had been custom-built for Jetstar.

Mr Buchanan said the technology would be introduced to other markets including domestic New Zealand services.

"Well over half of our existing domestic customers now utilize electronic check-in options in terms of web-check or self-service kiosks at airports and with Australians' well known love for new technology we believe this new service will be highly attractive to people whether they are frequent or irregular flyers," he said.

Achew! It's the flu, stupid, says TTF

SWINE flu is the major factor behind a massive fall in the number of international visitors to Australia from Japan, China and Korea in June, according to peak industry body Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF).

The latest overseas arrivals and departures figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal an overall fall in visitor numbers of 4.7 per cent compared to June last year, with huge drops from north Asia, including:

- Japan down 44.5 per cent or 12,600 visitors;
- China down 20.9 per cent or 3800 visitors;
- Korea down 20.6 per cent or 3300 visitors;
- Hong Kong down 18.1 per cent or 2100 visitors; and
- Thailand down 20.1 per cent or 1300 visitors.

TTF Managing Director Christopher Brown said the drop amplifies an already depressed market.

"Australia was already experiencing a downturn in international arrivals due to the global financial crisis," Mr Brown said, "and the incidence of swine flu has further exacerbated that decline."

"North Asian countries are especially sensitive to disease outbreaks, and that has been demonstrated by these falls.

"The focus now must be on turning those markets around, letting them know that it is safe to travel, otherwise tourism unemployment will continue to rise."

Mr Brown said the tourism downturn had cost jobs, especially in regional areas.

"Tourism is a labour-intensive service industry, so any decline in demand means job losses, and the industry has been disproportionately affected by the global financial crisis," he said.

"Our analysis shows that as many as 20,000 jobs have been lost in the tourism sector since the onset of the global financial crisis and the swine-flu-related fall in visitor numbers is likely to see more jobs go.

"We're calling for the Federal Government to match the extra contributions already made by the states for tourism funding to help expedite a recovery.

"Unless action is taken, we'll see more job losses in the \$90 billion tourism industry."

Merpati wreck 'found': official

A MERPATI Airlines official has confirmed that a wreckage found early yesterday near Papua province's Bintang Mountains in eastern Indonesia is probably that of a Twin Otter plane that disappeared on Sunday.

It is now reported that 21 people, not 16, were aboard the plane when it disappeared.

Search and rescue yesterday located a plane tail in forest 37 kilometres south of Oksibil, the town where the Merpati plane was due to land on Sunday. Rescuers were trying to land in the area by helicopter but there was little hope any passengers or crew would be found alive.

The plane left the provincial capital Jayapura at 1:10 p.m. on Sunday, but lost contact with air traffic controllers at 1:35 p.m.. The flight to Oksibil was supposed to take 50 minutes.

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As part of our focus on value, we begin a series of air fare guides for major destinations in the Asia-Pacific region

TCD BEST FARES

from Melbourne

All fares are one-way unless designated 'rtn'. Best fares exclude credit card charges, are sometimes bettered by sale fares and are sometimes unavailable. All care is taken, but these fares should be used as a guide only. All figures Australian dollars. LEGEND: QF (Qantas) JQ (Jetstar) DJ (Virgin Blue, Pacific Blue) TT (Tiger Airways) ZL (Rex) D7 (Air Asia X) UA (United Airlines) NZ (Air New Zealand).

Abu Dhabi QF 2053 rtn
Adelaide QF 85 DJ 69 JQ 59 TT 39
Alice Springs QF 229 TT 98
Albury QF 211 DJ 189 ZL 105
Amman QF 2082 rtn
Apia DJ 469
Auckland QF 199 DJ 189
Ayers Rock QF 280
Bahrain QF 2038 rtn
Ballina DJ 149 JQ 99
Bangkok QF 1277 rtn JQ 409
Beijing QF 1004 rtn
Beirut QF 2074 rtn
Brisbane QF 145 DJ 139 JQ 99
Broome QF 402 DJ 340
Buenos Aires QF 1738 rtn
Burnie ZL 124
Cairns QF 279 DJ 199 JQ 209
Canberra QF 89 DJ 85 TT 28
Chengdu QF 1184 rtn
Christchurch QF 387 DJ 189 JQ 169
Coffs Harbour QF219 DJ 170
Darwin QF 333 DJ 169 JQ 159
Delhi QF 1137 rtn
Denpasar DJ 459 JQ 439
Devonport QF 130

Dunedin DJ 259
Frankfurt QF 1869 rtn
Fraser Coast DJ 179
Gold Coast DJ 99 JQ 99 TT 78
Hamilton (NZ) DJ 279
Hamilton Island DJ 179 JQ 159
Hobart QF 98 DJ 64 JQ 59 TT 28
Hong Kong QF 943 rtn
Honiara DJ 509
Honolulu QF 1246 rtn
Jakarta QF 803 rtn
Johannesburg QF 2184 rtn
Kalgoorlie QF 349
Karratha QF 398 DJ 340
King Island ZL 131
Kuala Lumpur D7 \$219
Launceston QF 132 DJ 59 JQ 55 TT 28
London QF 1941 rtn

Los Angeles QF 964 rtn UA 931 rtn NZ 866 rtn VA 945 rtn
Mackay QF 279 DJ 199 TT 88
Manila QF 976 rtn
Merimbula ZL 140
Mexico City QF 1774 rtn
Mildura QF 117 DJ 99 ZL 99
Moruya ZL 183
Mount Gambier ZL 109
Mount Isa QF 374
Mumbai QF 1157 rtn
Nadi QF 315 DJ 349
Newcastle DJ 69 JQ 69
Newman DJ 340
New York QF 1170 rtn UA 1470 rtn
Noumea 4411
Papeete QF 1368 rtn
Paris QF 1892 rtn
Perth QF 214 DJ 213 JQ 179 TT 108

Port Hedland QF 409 DJ 340
Port Macquarie DJ 179
Port Moresby DJ 399
Port Vila QF 440 DJ 339
Queenstown QF 355 DJ 399
Rarotonga DJ 439
Rockhampton QF 243 DJ 180 TT 88
Rome QF 1883 rtn
Santiago QF 1724 rtn
San Francisco QF 1053 rtn
Seoul QF 1633 rtn
Shanghai QF 965
Singapore QF 930 rtn JQ 349
Sunshine Coast DJ 109 JQ 119 TT 88
Sydney QF 89 DJ 89 JQ 49 TT 39
Tonga (Nuku Alofa) DJ 379
Tokyo QF 1103 rtn
Townsville QF 301 DJ 209 JQ 179
Vancouver QF 1538 rtn
Wagga Wagga ZL 109
Wellington QF 239 DJ 259
Whitsunday Coast (Proserpine) DJ 199
Xian QF 1184 rtn

from Sydney

Abu Dhabi QF 2070 rtn
Adelaide QF 165 DJ 129 JQ 89
Alice Springs QF \$255
Albury QF 99 DJ 82
Amman QF 2099 rtn
Armidale QF 122
Apia DJ 429
Auckland QF 199 DJ 189 JQ 179
Ayers Rock QF 271 DJ
Bahrain QF 2055 rtn
Ballina DJ 75 JQ 69 ZL 129
Bangkok QF 1282 rtn
Bathurst ZL 94
Beijing QF 982 rtn
Beirut QF 2091 rtn
Brisbane QF 95 DJ 89 JQ 69
Broken Hill ZL 198
Broome QD 426 DJ 350
Buenos Aires QF 1616
Cairns QF 239 DJ 159 JQ 169
Canberra QF 90 DJ 75
Chengdu QF 1201 rtn
Christchurch QF 199 DJ 189 JQ 169
Coffs Harbour QF 107 DJ 89
Darwin QF 299 DJ 235 JQ 169
Delhi QF 1154 rtn

Denpasar JQ 439 DJ 459
Devonport QF 207
Dubbo QF 117 ZL 116
Dunedin DJ 259
Frankfurt QF 1886 rtn
Fraser Coast QF 159 DJ 105 JQ 79
Gold Coast DJ 75 JQ 69
Grafton ZL 146
Griffith ZL 135
Hamilton (NZ) DJ 229
Hamilton Island DJ 165 JQ 159
Hobart QF 196 DJ 89 JQ 89
Ho Chi Minh JQ 389
Hong Kong QF 960 rtn
Honiara DJ 479
Honolulu QF 1124 rtn JQ 459
Jakarta QF 781 rtn
Johannesburg QF 2162 rtn
Kalgoorlie QF 353
Karratha QF 417 DJ 360
Kuala Lumpur
Launceston QF 193 DJ JQ 79
Lismore ZL 129
London QF 1958 rtn

Los Angeles QF 981 rtn UA 931 rtn
Mackay QF 238 DJ 149
Manila QF 964 rtn
Melbourne DJ 89 TT 39 JQ 49
Merimbula ZL 140
Mexico City QF 1691 rtn
Mildura QF 178 DJ 189
Moree QF 122
Moruya ZL 126
Mount Hotham QF 199
Mount Isa QF 344
Mumbai QF 1135 rtn
Nadi QF 285 DJ 289
Narrandera-Leeton ZL 119
Newcastle
Newman DJ 360
New York QF 1181 rtn
Norfolk Island QF 307
Noumea QF 363
Orange ZL 132
Osaka JQ 429
Papeete QF 1242 rtn
Paris QF 1909 rtn
Parkes ZL 109
Perth QF 244 DJ 209

Phuket JQ 409
Port Hedland QF 437 DJ 249
Port Macquarie QF 100 DJ 102
Port Moresby QF 837 rtn DJ 319
Port Vila QF 392 DJ 269
Queenstown QF 259 DJ 299
Rarotonga DJ 439
Rockhampton QF 207 DJ 125
Rome QF 1901 rtn
Santiago QF 1602 rtn
San Francisco QF 1031 rtn
Seoul QF 1611 rtn
Shanghai QF 982 rtn
Singapore QF 947 rtn
Sunshine Coast DJ 94 JQ 89
Tamworth QF 122
Taree ZL 126
Tonga (Nuku Alofa) DJ 339
Tokyo QF 909 rtn JQ 429
Townsville DJ 149 JQ 129
Vancouver QF 1455 rtn
Wagga Wagga QF 99
Wellington DJ 249
Whitsunday Coast (Proserpine)
Xian QF 1201 rtn