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Malaysia Airlines given green light for service to Santiago

By G. Danapal and Azman Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Malaysia Airlines has been given the green light by Chile to fly to Santiago via Buenos Aires.

However, it will be subject to Malaysia Airlines getting fifth freedom rights from the Argentine Government to pick up passengers at Buenos Aires for onward destinations.

Chilean President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle agreed to this during his meeting with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this afternoon at the Prime Minister's Department.

Dr Mahathir headed a 13-member delegation at the meeting. Members of the delegation included Foreign

Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha (Minister-in-Attendance) and senior officials of various ministries.

The nine-member Chilean delegation included Foreign Affairs Minister Jose Miguel Insulza, Economy Minister Alvaro Garcia and Agriculture Minister Emiliano Ortega.

Foreign Ministry Deputy Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Halim Ali, briefing reporters after the meeting, said:

"The Chilean President said Malaysia Airlines could

begin service... However, we will have to work out the fifth freedom rights for Malaysia Airlines with Argentina."

Although Malaysia Airlines has been flying to Buenos Aires via Johannesburg, it has not been granted the rights by the Argentinian Government for onward destinations.

Malaysia and Chile signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 1992 to provide for the establishment of air links between the two countries.

Under the MoU, the designated airlines of Malaysia and Chile are given the rights to operate two flights a week each between the two countries.

Halim said the Chilean President, who is here on a three-day official visit at the

invitation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar, also proposed three-way co-operation among Malaysia, the Philippines and Chile in ship-building.

He said Frei who was in the Philippines before arriving here, had discussions with Fidel Ramos on the matter.

"He said Ramos had, in principle, agreed to the three-way co-operation. Malaysia welcomes the move and will pursue the matter... Chile has the expertise in ship-building."

He said Frei and Dr Mahathir also discussed ways to further enhance bilateral trade and co-operation.

Halim said since Dr Mahathir's visit to Chile last

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President Frei, PM condemn nuclear testing

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year, trade between the two countries had picked up but was still in Chile's favour.

He said Dr Mahathir had suggested to Frei that the Latin American country make Malaysia a gateway to enter the booming Asean market.

"The Chilean President also said likewise, urging Malaysia to use Chile as a gateway into Latin America where the economy is growing at a rapid pace."

The two leaders also condemned the nuclear testing in the Pacific by France and agreed to co-operate at the international level for a total ban on nuclear weapons and testing.

On bilateral relations, Halim said the two leaders agreed to co-operate on scientific and technical areas but nothing specific was discussed.

"Chile is the most advanced economy in Latin America, as such they have the expertise in various areas... And there is a possibility of exchange of expertise in these areas."

He said an MoU for co-operation in technical and scientific areas was being worked out.

"Both sides also agreed that there should be more visits between the leaders and the business community of the two countries."

Halim said to bolster the good ties, Dr Mahathir had accepted an invitation by the Chilean President to make another visit to his country next year.

Frei, who arrived here last night with his wife Marta Larraechea De Frei, was this morning accorded a red carpet welcome by the King and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah at Parliament Square.

Also present at the ceremony were Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Cabinet Ministers and foreign dignitaries.

Frei inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by four officers and 103 men of the Royal Malay Regiment from Sungai Besi, headed by Mejar Nor Azmi Abdul Karim.

A 21-gun salute was fired. The Royal Malaysian Navy band played the national anthems of the two countries.

Later in the morning, Frei and his delegation visited the Proton national car manufacturing plant in Shah Alam. They were taken for a brief tour of the plant by the company's deputy managing director Kisai Rahmat.

Chile started importing Proton cars last year. Malaysia exported 337 units and as at September, 419 Proton cars had been exported to Chile.

Malaysia and Chile are members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum and G-15.