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Mahathir-India

MALAYSIA WANTS MORE LANDING RIGHTS AND EXPRESSWAY PROJECTS

By: Zainoor Sulaiman

BANGALORE, Dec 22 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian government is negotiating for more landing rights in India for Malaysia Airlines (MAS) to cope with the increasing air traffic flow between the two countries, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

While the response from the Indian government had been encouraging there were still some details to be ironed out with its national carrier Air India, he told a news conference, here, at the end of his official visit to India.

Dr Mahathir said Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, who accompanied him on the visit, was negotiating with the Indian authorities on some package or code-sharing terms acceptable to both national airlines.

He hoped that when the negotiations were finalised MAS would be able to fly to Bangalore, the capital city of Karnataka, India's eighth largest state with a population of 50 million.

The introduction of more flights would encourage greater flow of tourists between the two countries and between India and the Asean region, he said.

Dr Mahathir said his visit here had achieved its objective and he was reassured by the new central government of India that there was no change in India's policy of open economy and the two countries could work closely together to step up bilateral economic cooperation.

He said Malaysia was keen to share its experience and participate in the construction of privatised highways in India.

He said negotiations were still in progress for Malaysian companies to participate in proposed tolled roads.

Because of the low volume of traffic the period for toll collection by companies granted the concession should be longer so that they could recover their investment, he said.

Dr Mahathir said during his talks with Indian government leaders and captains of the industry, he invited Indian businessmen to use Malaysia as the gateway to Asean -- the fourth largest trading entity, after the United States, European Union and Japan, with exports worth nearly US300 billion (RM750 billion).

While in Bangalore, the prime minister visited Hindustani Aeronautical Ltd (HAL), Bharat Heavy Electrical Ltd (BHEL) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro).

HAL is a major aeronautical company with 55 years experience in design, development, production and overhaul of a variety of military and civil aircraft, helicopters, power plants, avionics and associated systems of Western and Russian origin.

BHEL is an Indian industrial giant which has participated in power generation projects in Malaysia for the past 25 years.

BHEL's first involvement in Malaysia came through an order of two 60 MW boilers for the Port Dickson power station from the then National Electricity Board (now Tenaga Nasional) in the early seventies and was later involved in several power projects including the hydro-electric projects in Perak and Sabah.

On his visit to Isro, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was interested to build micro-satellite here.

Replying to a question, he said Malaysia had no plans at the moment to launch its geo-stationary satellite as India was now launching low-

orbit satellite.

Malaysia might consider launching its satellite here once India had the capacity to do so, he said. -- BERNAMA

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