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AirAsia seeks to spread its wings in Asia

PETALING JAYA, Sat. - Malaysia's second national carrier, AirAsia Sdn Bhd, has submitted a proposal to the Transport Ministry last week to expand its operations to China, India and Indonesia.

"We hope to get the feedback (from the ministry) very soon," AirAsia director Datuk Tik Mustaffa said today.

He was speaking to reporters before the commemoration of its second aircraft by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang.

AirAsia's second aircraft, a brand-new Boeing 737-300s, is a 148-tourist class seater and leased from GE capital Aviation Services Ltd, USA.

However, Tik declined to disclose the routes which AirAsia is now seeking in the respective countries.

The airline plans to expand its operations beyond the Asian region in the long-term and this will be the second national carrier covering Europe as well as West Asia.

"We plan to lease two more bigger aircraft by the fourth quarter of this year, probably the 757-230s, for our longer range flights," he said.

AirAsia also plans extra flights to Kota Baru, Kelantan, and Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, during the double festive season.

On the possibility of AirAsia operating flights for domestic routes, he said: "We will consider, but it will all depend on the demand and market potential."

AirAsia, which was incorporated in 1993, is a joint-venture company between Hicom Holdings Bhd, which holds an 85 per cent stake, and Mofaz Air Sdn Bhd which has 15 per cent.

The airline failed to take off as it had planned in 1994 when MAS refused to share some of its regional routes with AirAsia.

Its first aircraft was launched last November with an inaugural flight from the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport to Pattaya, Thailand.

The airline has three scheduled flights on Monday, Tuesday and Saturday to Taipeh from Kuala Lumpur every week. It flies six times a week from Kuala Lumpur to Kota Kinabalu.

(END)