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MAS, Kuwait Airlines to hold talks

MALAYSIA Airlines will hold talks with Kuwait Airlines seeking ways to resume air services between the two countries, its chairman Tan Sri Tajuddin Ramli said, adding that this can be done once the logistics have been finalised.

He said MAS needs to take an overall look at its international routes and work Kuwait into it in a way that would make it mutually beneficial.

Tajuddin, who heads the business delegation on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's official visit to the Gulf State, said this at a Press conference in response to Dr Mahathir's call that air services between Malaysia and Kuwait be resumed.

Malaysia Airlines' flight to Kuwait ceased after the 1990 Iraqi invasion. Malaysia Airlines uses Dubai now as a stop-over point in some of its routes to Europe. Kuwait used to be a technical stop-over point before the war.

"There are many things that need to be worked out very carefully before we can resume services with Kuwait. It can be done. Kuwait Airlines, too, has to look at its present strength before resuming services.

"I feel that we need to look closely at the west Asian region. If we resume operations to Kuwait, we need to see other possible destinations within the region. Cairo is, perhaps, one destination we need to consider," Tajuddin said.

Dr Mahathir, at a Press conference for Malaysian journalists on Sunday, said Malaysia Airlines should also consider code-sharing possibilities with Kuwait Airlines, a point which Tajuddin said would be discussed in the coming months.

Tajuddin said he would also be looking at other areas of collaboration with Kuwait Airlines, in particular joint efforts where bilateral trade between the two countries could be promoted.

Asked for his views on Kuwait as a possible business partner, Tajuddin said Kuwait's long standing reputation as a financial manager could be tapped.

"There is definitely possible areas of partnerships with Kuwaiti financial institutions," Tajuddin said, adding that a more detailed study need to be done by the interested parties.

Asked on the Indian Government's decision not to allow foreign airline companies to take equity in Indian Airlines, Tajuddin said the matter was being studied and more data was being collected before any decision is made.

On Sunday, India had ordered foreign airlines to withdraw their investments from the Indian domestic carriers in six months following a new aviation policy by the Indian Cabinet.

This decision effectively killed off a US\$708 million (RM1.74 billion) plan by Singapore Airlines and an Indian company to set up a new airline in India.

The decision is also likely to see the end of Malaysia Airlines' proposed acquisition of a stake in Jet Airways, which offered Malaysia Airlines an equity share in 1994.

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