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Malaysia seeks to resume air links with Kuwait

Kamarul Yunus in Kuwait City

KUWAIT CITY, Mon: Malaysia Airlines will negotiate with Kuwait Airways to seek ways to resume air services between Malaysia and Kuwait.

Its chairman, Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli, said such a plan to revive air links with Kuwait would only materialise once the logistics have been finalised.

"Malaysia Airlines has to take an overall look at its international routes and work with Kuwait so that it would be mutually beneficial for both airlines," he told Malaysian journalists covering the three-day official visit of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad since Saturday.

Tajudin, who is heading the business delegation accompanying Dr Mahathir to the Gulf state, said this at a press conference in response to the Prime Minister's call that air links between Malaysia and Kuwait be resumed.

Malaysia Airlines' flights to Kuwait ceased after the 1990 Iraqi invasion.

Since then, the national air carrier uses Dubai more as a stop-over point on some of its Malaysia-Europe routes.

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.

"However, I feel it can be done. Kuwait Airlines, too, has to look at its present strength before resuming services.

"I also 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," Tajudin said.

Dr Mahathir, at a press conference on Sunday, said Malaysia Airlines should also consider code-sharing possibilities with Kuwait Airways, a point which Tajudin said would be discussed in the coming months.

He also said he would be looking at other areas of collaboration with Kuwait Airways, in particular joint efforts where bilateral trade between both countries could be promoted.

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

"There are definitely possible areas of partnership with Kuwaiti financial institutions," he said, adding that a more detailed study needs to be carried out by interested parties.

Asked to comment on the Indian Government's decision not to allow foreign airline companies to take equity in Indian airlines, Tajudin said the matter is being studied.

"More data are being collected before any decision can be made. However, Malaysian Airlines will not be affected by the directive as the airline will seek other means of investing in the Indian airline industry.

"We may use Malaysian Helicopter Services (MHS) as our vehicle investment in the Indian airline industry.

"But, we may have to seek clarification from the Indian authorities whether MHS would be allowed to venture in India in this particular sector," he added.

He also did not dismiss the possibility that Technology Resource

Industries Bhd, owned by him, would be investing in India, including the airline industry.

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