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#### MAS TO INTRODUCE SERVICE TO SLOVENIA

By: Zainoor Sulaiman

LJUBLJANA, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Malaysia Airlines plans to expand service to Slovenia to enhance trade and economic co-operation between Malaysia and this Balkan state, its executive chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli said today.

MAS will be sending a team here next month to work out details for the introduction of its service here with government officials, the Slovene state-owned airline Adria Airways and hotel and tour operators.

Tajudin told Bernama: "We are looking into the possibility of expanding to Ljubljana our present direct services either from Vienna (Austria) or Zagreb (Croatia) to Ljubljana."

The proposed move is also in compliance with the Malaysia-Slovenia Air Services Agreement signed during the just-concluded official visit of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik signed on behalf of Malaysia and his Slovene counterpart Anton Berganer, for Slovenia.

Ling told Bernama the government did not set any deadline for MAS to expand service to the Slovene capital.

He said MAS could initially sell tickets here and enter into code-sharing arrangement with Adria Airways which could fly MAS passengers to the next pick-up points such as Vienna, Zagreb or Zurich.

Tajudin said he had had initial talks with Adria Airways officials and airport authorities and was satisfied that the airline and the airport at Brnik have the capacity and capability to handle MAS flights, including chartered ones.

He said he was also concerned with other support services like hotel accommodation and tour services.

At present there were only about 2,000 hotel rooms in Ljubljana, about one third of the number of rooms available in Langkawi.

"This is certainly inadequate," Tajudin said.

Tajudin, who led a 28-member business delegation accompanying Dr Mahathir's official visit here said, the Malaysian private sector was keen on investing in tourism-related projects, including building hotels and resorts, to help boost the Slovene tourism industry.

Malaysian businessmen were also ready to participate in the banking and finance, telecommunications, transportation and warehousing sectors, he said.

Sapura was negotiating participation in the telecommunication industry in Slovenia.

According to Tajudin, Slovenia's businessmen were serious in promoting trade and investment with Malaysia and as such he urged Malaysian businessmen to be more focussed in proposing ventures with their Slovene counterparts.

He said Malaysian businessmen should take the advantage of the strategic location of this Adriatic state as the gateway to export Malaysian manufactured goods to Central and Eastern Europe.

As Slovenia set to be the first country from this region to join the European Union (EU), its entry would also provide opportunities for Malaysia to channel its exports to the rest of Europe via Slovenia.

Tajudin, who is also president of the Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said he was very impressed with the success of Slovene entrepreneurs.

He said although Slovenia introduced market economy only about six

years ago after years of socialist system under the former Yugoslav federation, it had been very successful in promoting the growth of local entrepreneurs.

Tajudin said he would suggest to the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development to send a team here to study Slovenia's success in developing its entrepreneurs. -- BERNAMA

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