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## Second aircraft for AirAsia

AIRASIA Sdn Bhd, which launched its first Boeing 737-300s last year, officiated the arrival of its second aircraft in a colourful traditional tepung tawar ceremony at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang, Selangor.

The ceremony, which was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Saturday, marked another milestone for AirAsia which is aiming to go global in five years.

AirAsia director Datuk Tik Mustaffa said the company had made known to the Transport Ministry two or three months ago on its interest to have additional flight destinations.

"We submitted a proposal to the ministry last week on expanding our operation within the Asian region to include China, India and Indonesia," he told a Press conference earlier.

Plans are in the pipeline to fly to Subic Bay or Cebu in the Philippines next year.

The country's second national carrier, commercially known as Pacific Eagle, commenced operation on Nov 18 last year after a two-year delay when Malaysia Airlines refused to share with AirAsia some of its regional routes.

While Malaysia Airlines will continue to be the country's sole international carrier, AirAsia will ensure that there will not be an overlapping of routes between the two airlines.

Tik said the airline would also consider operating domestic flights if the local demand and also market share justified the move.

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

Tik was also reported as saying that the airlines aimed to break even and turn a profit after the third year of its operation.

It also plans to buy its own aircraft by 1999, but it will continue leasing wide-body aircraft, probably Boeing 757-230s, which are expected to arrive in the last quarter of this year.

AirAsia's current focus is the tourism sector but at the same time, it will also promote its flights to businessmen.

Besides Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia, Pelangi Air, Berjaya Air, Asia Pacific Airlines and Saeaga Airlines have been given air operating permits while 29 companies have been granted AOPs for unscheduled operations within Malaysia.

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