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MAS gets Lebanon offer

Zainul Arifin in Doha

DOHA, Mon: Lebanon has offered Malaysia Airlines fifth freedom rights into Beirut, enabling the national carrier to pick up passengers from the Lebanese capital city onto another destination.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir disclosed this to Malaysian journalists yesterday evening after his meeting with Lebanese President Rafik Hariri on the sidelines of the 9th Organisation of Islamic Conference meeting here.

Fifth freedom rights allow an airline to operate third-country routes which are not linked to its home turf.

The rights will provide the national carrier with the opportunity to tap the potentially large passenger market of West Asia.

Malaysia Airlines operates thrice weekly services into Beirut using the 747.

In addition, Malaysia Airlines and Middle East Airlines have a code-share arrangement whereby the latter will get a seat allocation on Malaysia Airlines' services between Beirut and Kuala Lumpur and vice-versa and between Beirut and Sydney and vice-versa.

Dr Mahathir said the Lebanese President also wished for greater cooperation between the two countries in numerous fields.

The Prime Minister had several bilateral meetings, including with Sudan's President Abdoulaye Wade, Somalian head Abdi Kassim Salad and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah Adul Aziz Al-Saud.

With the Sudanese President, Dr Mahathir said Wade wanted Malaysia to increase its investments in the country, including developing its natural resources.

Sudan also wants Malaysian companies to look into the possibility of developing its transportation system as well as participate in a major hydroelectric project.

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