

PM: Foreigner may be appointed MAS technical adviser or COO

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By EIRMALASARE BANI

A FOREIGNER with aviation background may be appointed as technical adviser or chief operating officer of Malaysian Airline System Bhd (MAS), says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Government needs someone with the technical knowledge of running an airline as the newly-appointed MAS non-executive chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin and managing director Mohd Nor Mohd Yusof are both from different sectors, he said.

"They (Azizan and Mohd Nor) are from the petroleum industry and the Treasury (respectively)... it is not the same running an airline. We may need to find a foreigner or somebody who has the technical knowledge."

The Prime Minister was speaking at a press conference after opening the International Conference on Globalisation in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He was asked about the possibility of foreigners being engaged to help revive the national carrier's fortunes.

There are currently no posts of technical adviser or chief operating officer at MAS.

Azizan, who is chairman of Petronas and president of Putrajaya Corp, and Md Nor, previously adviser to the Ministry of Finance, assumed their new duties from February 15.

Md Nor was also president and chief executive officer of the former Bank of Commerce (M) Bhd, now merged

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with Bank Bumiputra Malaysia to become Bumiputra-Commerce Bank).

The appointments were announced by the Finance Ministry following the completion of the sale by Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli of his 29.09 per cent stake in the company held through Naluri Bhd to the Minister of Finance Inc for RM1.792 billion.

The Finance Ministry had also said that Tajudin's resignation as MAS chairman had been accepted.

The Government now has a combined 58 per cent equity holding in the national carrier.

The other agencies with substantial interests are Kumpulan Wang Amanah Pencen (20.04 per cent) and Employees Provident Fund (9.1 per cent).

Asked why MAS has yet to bring in a foreign strategic partner, Dr Mahathir said the search for one is not easy.

"The parties must agree... they must be willing. There are lots of people who are interested but, of course, they have to look at the terms," he said.

The Prime Minister declined to name the potential suitors or reveal the status of the negotiations.

On reports that some foreign airlines, which had expressed interest to acquire a stake in MAS, have pulled out of the negotiations, Dr Mahathir said: "When you are negotiating something,

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COMPANIES THAT HAVE MADE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO KLSE UNDER PRACTICE NOTE 4/2/2001

Abstar Corp	MBF Holdings
Asian Pac Holdings	Olympia Ind
Aokam Perdana	Pan Malaysia Holdings
Aras Murni	Plantation & Development
Associated Kaolin	Parit Perak Holdings
Austral Amalgamated	Pancaran Ikrab
Artwright Holdings	Promet
Berjuntai Tin Dredging	Penas Corp
Bridgecon Holdings	Park May
Bescorp Ind	Perdana Ind
Chase Perdana	Rahman Hydraulic Tin
Construction & Supplies Hse	Reka Pacific
Cygal	Repco Holdings
Denko Ind Corp	RNC Corp
Dewina	Sateras Resources
Emico Holdings	Seng Hup Corp
Espirit Group	Southern Plastics Holdings
Geahin Engineering	SCK
Hotline Furniture	Sistem Televisyen Malaysia
Innovest	Siew Heng Chan
Instangreen Corp	Sriwani Holdings
Jasatera	Sri Hartamas
Kelana Mas	S & P Ind
Kemayan Corp	Sportma Corp
Kiara Emas Ind	Tajo
Kilang Papan Seribu Daya	Taiwah Garments
Kuala Lumpur Ind Holdings	Taiping Con
Lion Group Lion Corp	Timbermaster Ind
L&M Corp	Transwater Corp
Nauticalink	Trans Capital
NCK	TechnoAsia Holdings
MBF Capital	UCP Resources
MGR Corp	Uniphoenix Corp
Mycom	Wing Tiek Holdings
MGIC	Wembley Ind Holdings
Measurex	Woo Hing Brothers
Mentiga Corp	

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you do not announce it to the world."

Switzerland's SAirGroup was said to be a serious suitor but a new management at the group has since reportedly decided to review foreign expansion plans due to weak profits. Other airlines which have expressed similar interest are KLM Royal Dutch and Australian Qantas Airways.

Foreign shareholding in MAS, which the Government allows up to 45 per cent, now stands at only 7.47 per cent.

On the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange yesterday, MAS shares traded 4 sen lower to RM3.84.