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Mahathir-MAS

MAS' CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER MAY BE A FOREIGNER, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that a foreigner may be appointed as the chief operating officer of Malaysia Airlines (MAS).

"We need to find some foreigners who have more technical knowledge of running an airline," he told a news conference after launching the International Conference on Globalisation, here.

Dr Mahathir was responding to a question on the possibility of foreigners being engaged to rehabilitate the ailing national carrier.

Dr Mahathir said that a foreign expert was needed because running an airline was not the same as managing a petroleum company and the economy.

He said that Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin and Datuk Mohamed Nor Mohamed Yusof came from the petroleum industry and the Treasury, respectively.

"We may get a foreigner or may get somebody who is knowledgeable (in running an airline)," he said.

Azizan, chairman of Petronas and president of Putrajaya Corporation, was appointed non-executive chairman of the airline while Mohamed Nor, adviser to the Ministry of Finance, its managing director, effective Feb 15.

Mohamed Nor was also president and chief executive officer of the then Bank of Commerce (M) Bhd before being appointed adviser to the Finance Ministry.

The Finance Ministry, which made the announcement on Feb 14, also said that the application by MAS chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli to resign from his post had been accepted.

This follows the completion of the sale 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 said that Azizan's appointment would not affect his other positions.

Asked on the status of the negotiation regarding the government's planned sale of a stake in MAS to foreigners, Dr Mahathir said that although a lot of parties had expressed interest, it was not easy to decide.

"The partners must agree and the foreign partners must be willing," he said.

He declined to name the foreign parties involved as the discussion was ongoing.

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