

**Anwar to take on PM over MAS-AirAsia deal**  
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**By Debra Chong**

PETALING JAYA, Sept 17 — Tens of thousand of airline workers upset by the recent share-swap deal between the national carrier and AirAsia have sought out Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's help to end their dilemma.

The opposition leader said today he will take the issue to Parliament as what affects Malaysia Airlines (MAS) involves national interest.

"The prime minister has to answer to this," he told a press conference today after an hour-long meeting with representatives from MAS's eight worker unions behind closed doors.

"They have a right to information," he said.

Anwar, a former deputy prime minister and finance minister, related that the unions were concerned that airline staff were forced to bear the burden of all that had gone wrong in the national carrier.

They were also unhappy that their complaints and request for information had been ignored.

The national carrier has eight unions representing its 15,000 upper- and lower-level staff. These are: the MAS Pilots' Association, MAS Employees' Union, MAS Executive Staff Association, Sabah Executive Union of MAS, MAS Managers' Association, Airline Working Union of Sabah, Airline Working Union of Sarawak, and the Sarawak Executive Staff Committee.

The unionists, however, refused to speak with reporters when approached.

MAS and AirAsia inked the deal on August 9, which allows the loss-making national carrier to swap a 20 per cent stake for 10 per cent in Asia's top money-making budget carrier.

MAS had announced in August a net loss of RM527 million for the second quarter of 2011 due to higher fuel costs despite recording a better yield and a nine per cent growth in passenger revenue from the same period last year.

This brings total losses in the first half of the year to RM769 million even as the airline said that profit outlook for the second half of the year appears bleak.

Today, Anwar argued that MAS's losses were due more to the carrier's poor management skills than its staff performance.

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