

PRIME NEWS

Weststar takes delivery of AW189 chopper

STAYING ON TOP: Firm is the 1st in Asia Pacific to operate new range of helicopters

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WESTSTAR Aviation Services Sdn Bhd is confident of remaining the top offshore transportation service provider, not just in Malaysia but the region, with the delivery of the first of its four AgustaWestland AW189 super medium helicopters yesterday.

Its chief executive officer Gen (R) Tan Sri Muhammad Ismail Jamaluddin took delivery of the aircraft on the sidelines of the Farnborough International Airshow (FIA) 2014, near here, making the company the first to operate the new range of helicopters in the Asia Pacific region.

The AW189 considerably increases the capability of Weststar Aviation in the offshore transport services industry, as it is capable of carrying more passengers and cargo and travel further than the company's current fleet of AW139 helicopters.

"At present, we are dealing with the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) to get the helicopter certified, but I don't see any problems there," said Ismail.

If all goes well, Weststar Aviation will have the AW189 up and running in peninsular Malaysia by the end of the year, or early in the first quarter of next year. And Weststar Aviation is looking to the future with the purchase of the four AW189s, ordered during last year's Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition.



Gen (R) Tan Sri Muhammad Ismail Jamaluddin says the firm deals with the **Department of Civil Aviation** to get the helicopter certified

"In the future, (the oil and gas industry) will be looking into deeper waters, so you will need the endurance (that the AW189 can offer)," said Ismail.

He said with the AW189s and the seven AW139s still on order, making the company's full fleet out to be 34, Weststar Aviation believes the value of its contracts will rise from RM10 billion to RM13 billion.

"To cater to the industry's burgeoning operational needs, we aim to expand our fleet up to 100 helicopters in the next five years.

"We strongly think that conditions are ripe for more demand in the immediate future and we aim to make the most out of this window of opportunity."

The company currently has contracts in Thailand, Mauritania and Morocco and is currently working on deals in Mozambique and South Africa, in the hopes that one of these would pan out.