



Weststar Aviation Services CEO Gen (R) Tan Sri Muhammad Ismail, Jamaluddin (left), Syed Azman and AgustaWestland Malaysia Sdn Bhd MD Vincenzo Alaimo (right) with a AgustaWestland AW139 model at the Singapore Airshow

Weststar targets 2015 IPO

Aviation firm orders 10 helicopters for RM600mil

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SINGAPORE: Weststar Aviation Services Sdn Bhd has ordered 10 new helicopters for RM600mil for its expansion and plans to float the company on Bursa Malaysia by the first quarter of next year.

"We will finalise details on the flotation by May and appoint investment bankers by June this year," Weststar Group managing director Tan Sri Syed Azman Syed Ibrahim – popularly known as the "AP King" – told *StarBiz* yesterday in Singapore.

Weststar Aviation Services, a unit of the Weststar Group, provides offshore helicopter transportation services to the oil and gas (O&G) industry globally.

Last October, Syed Azman surprised the market by selling 30% of his company to KKR & Co, one of the largest private equity firms in the United States, for RM642mil.

"We are ready to list even now, the sooner the better, but valuation-wise, we still want to add value and that is why we are looking at the

first quarter of next year.

"All the local banks are interested to do our initial public offering and so are some Singaporean banks," he said.

Syed Azman said that for now, "we are looking at Bursa Malaysia, but are open to exploring a dual listing too. Yes, why not, but a lot depends on market conditions and valuations."

Experts value the company currently at about RM3.1bil. He, however, declined to say how much Weststar would raise in its flotation exercise.

The company, which started out by servicing local clients like Petroliam Nasional Bhd, has a presence in several countries now and a contract order book of over RM8bil.

Syed Azman said expansion was on the cards and he expected Weststar to secure RM3bil worth of contracts this year to boost its order book to about RM11bil.

Last week, the company began offering helicopter services to a company in Thailand in a RM2bil deal.

It also expects to wrap up its US\$200mil

contract with a firm in Morocco soon.

Africa is a market where he expects an O&G growth spurt in the future. Weststar is keen on exploring jobs in South America as well.

Syed Azman pointed out that in order to win new jobs, Weststar would also need to expand its fleet size, which explains its order of 10 new AW139 intermediate twin helicopters yesterday at the Singapore Air Show.

The company is buying the aircraft from AgustaWestland for RM600mil. The delivery is scheduled from next year onwards and Weststar will fund the purchase via borrowings, added Weststar Aviation Services chief executive officer Tan Sri Muhammad Ismail Jamaluddin. Weststar also has RM300mil in cash sitting in its coffers.

With the new order, Weststar has ordered a total of 34 aircraft from AgustaWestland over the past two years worth over RM1.8bil.

"There will be demand for 40 helicopter services in the future and if we can get to service 10, it would be good," Syed Azman added.