



Cost-effective **DIRECTION**

WESTSTAR Aviation Services is targeting short-term contracts for its AW189 helicopters as such jobs are more profitable and will set the pace for the company's earnings growth.

REPORT ON **B2**



WASSB favours short-term jobs

MORE PROFITABLE:

First AW189 copter leased to JX Nippon under 3-month deal

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WESTSTAR Aviation Services Sdn Bhd (WASSB) is targeting short-term contracts for its AgustaWestland AW189 helicopter as they are more profitable, said founder Tan Sri Syed Azman Syed Ibrahim.

Weststar Group, which has about 40 AgustaWestland helicopters in its portfolio, had ordered four units of the AW189.

It is the first operator of the AW189 helicopter in Asia.

The company has taken delivery of the first unit and recently won a RM10 million contract from JX Nippon Oil & Gas Exploration Sdn Bhd to transport offshore workers and goods.

The AW189 will fly from Miri Airport to JX Nippon's deepwater exploration drilling located at the deepwater block DW2F, 210 nautical miles off Sarawak. The contract is for three months, with an extension option in October.

"Short-term contracts are very profitable and that is the direction of the company for its earnings growth," Syed Azman told Business Times yesterday.

It was reported that WASSB, which is eyeing a listing on Bursa Malaysia, recorded a net profit of RM40 million in 2012.

Syed Azman said the second AW189 would be delivered in the third or fourth quarter of next year, while two more were scheduled for delivery in 2017 and 2018.

"We are aiming to bid for more jobs in Indonesia via our vehicle, PT Weststar Aviation Indonesia, especially in Balikpapan."

Meanwhile, WASSB business development director Datuk Anuar Noordin said with the AW189, clients had the option to run a more cost-

effective operation that would translate into a comparatively lower cost per passenger.

"At a time when the oil and gas market is soft and plummeting oil prices are causing more companies to put their expansion plans on hold, the cost-effectiveness of running the AW189 provides a simple solution.

"The AW189 comes with the latest modern avionic system that improves the overall performance of the aircraft from every aspect, particularly safety," he said in a statement after the contract's flight commencement yesterday.

Anuar said WASSB aimed to broaden its client base in Sabah and Sarawak with its AW189 helicopter.

"We are seeing more opportunities for this type of heavy helicopter to support deepwater operations in Sabah and Sarawak," he added.



Weststar Aviation Services Sdn Bhd (WASSB) domestic operations manager **Datuk Jamil Osman** (right) and JX Nippon Oil & Gas Exploration Sdn Bhd senior logistics adviser **Gordon Mellis** with WASSB's first AW189 helicopter in Miri. WASSB expects to take delivery of three more AW189s by 2018.