

No Air Jamaica takeover

Caribbean Airlines will not take over the debts of Air Jamaica.

It will only take over the floundering airline's profitable routes transport minister Colm Imbert said yesterday.

Responding to an article carried in yesterday's edition of the Jamaica Gleaner that by April 12 Caribbean Airlines will be taking over the operations of Air Jamaica, Imbert said at the post-Cabinet press briefing at the Diplomatic Centre, St Ann's that Trinidad and Tobago's national carrier will not be doing so.

"I have no idea where that is coming from," he said.

Armed with a copy of the Gleaner report, he said that Caribbean Airlines will take over the profitable routes.

He said there was a value attached to the routes which Caribbean Airlines will be taking over but negotiations for taking over the routes were being treated confidentially at present.

Caribbean Airlines always wanted to be the airline for the Caribbean and it was not going to be saddled with inferior and obsolete aircraft, he added.

Noting that Jamaica is heavily dependent on tourism, Imbert said that Caribbean Airlines will be replacing the airlift that would be required when Air Jamaica stops flying.

Imbert said that the Jamaican government agreed to hand over the profitable route rights to Caribbean Airlines.

The Gleaner reported Air Jamaica's President and CEO Bruce Nobles as saying that Air Jamaica and Caribbean Airlines were working towards a "transaction date concurrent with our major schedule change on April 12, 2010".

He said the plan was that all employees' positions would be made redundant on that date and Caribbean Airlines would be financially responsible for the transition operation after the transaction date. He said the current transition proposal is to continue operating the airline, using its existing fleet under contract to Caribbean Airlines, for perhaps as long as one year. - Trinidad and Tobago Express