

AirNam board endorses aircraft purchase plan

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THE Air Namibia board has endorsed a proposal to buy six planes for almost N\$200 million, The Namibian has learnt.

Although the paper could not reach works minister Alpheus !Naruseb for comment yesterday, the ministry's permanent secretary, Willem Goeiemann, professed knowledge of the issue.

Goeiemann added that the ministry would discuss the board's acceptance of the proposal soon.

Air Namibia's spokesperson, Paul Nakawa, did not respond to questions sent to him yesterday on the way

forward.

The Namibian last month reported that an internal aircraft selection committee had recommended to the board to purchase two Brazilian-made Embraer Regional Jet (ERJ) 135s and four Embraer XERJ 145s for almost N\$200 million. Currently, Air Namibia is leasing four ERJ 135s from private aviation company Westair Aviation.

The private airline company bought the aircraft, which Air Namibia was leasing from Air France's subsidiary, HOP!

According to Air Namibia's website, the airline has a fleet of 10 aircraft, including two Airbus A319-200, with a carrying capacity of 112 which they own.

The airline is also leasing four Airbuses A319-100 for its regional routes, and four ERJ 135 for domestic routes.

The lease agreements for the four ERJs are expected to expire early next year. The Namibian reported last month that the airline would buy the six aircraft for N\$197,7 million, compared to the leasing cost of N\$234 million over five years. The proposal further indicated that the buying will come with an interest risk exposure of N\$41,7 million if the airline borrowed N\$156 million and pay back the loan over five years, which they believe would still be a better option.

The cost per aircraft was estimated at between N\$19,5 million and N\$26 million.

Public enterprises minister Leon Jooste told The Namibian yesterday that he was not aware that the Air Namibia board had accepted the proposal to buy new planes.

“This will have to be presented to the Cabinet committee on treasury through the line ministry for discussion before any approval,” Jooste said.

During a public lecture at Unam on Monday, Jooste said the national airline's current losses were unsustainable.

Finance minister Calle Schlettwein was unreachable for comment, and he did not answer questions sent to him.