ABU DHABI AVIATION DIVERSIFYING BUSINESS

News / Business aviation



Abu Dhabi Aviation, the biggest commercial helicopter operator in the Middle East, said that it is using the softening of demand for its aviation services to diversify its lines of business, adding training and real estate investment to its portfolio of activities.

“It’s not a secret that we are in a cyclical business," said Nader Al Hammadi, the chairman of Abu Dhabi Aviation. “It is not the first time the oil price went down, and it’s not the last time. We are not in a panic mode."

Mr Al Hammadi said that corporate travel has been the most severely affected part of Abu Dhabi Aviation’s business as companies typically save on travel during downturns and are often the last to recover. Oil prices are suffering their biggest drop in more than a decade.

Other parts of the company’s business, such as cargo and training, have not been as badly affected as its corporate services, he said.

Still, the company is pushing ahead with its diversification plans, the chairman said. The company’s new training facilities in Khalifa City, which includes flight simulators, would be operational by the end of the last quarter of the year and the company is looking to expand its real

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estate business. Abu Dhabi Aviation has real estate assets in the UK and the UAE.

“We need to put them together to make sure that they all run efficiently. On top of this we will use the opportunity of the growth in the real estate market for support, as a new product line," he said.

The chairman was speaking at a media event yesterday to celebrate 40 years of collaboration with Bell Helicopter, the US aircraft company. Abu Dhabi Aviation has a fleet of 44 Bell aircraft and employs more than 1,200 people.

Abu Dhabi Aviation, which is listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, operates 60 helicopters and four fixed-wing aircraft. The Bell helicopters that Abu Dhabi Aviation operates are Bell 412 and Bell 212 models. Its Bell helicopters have completed 1 million hours of flight time in Abu Dhabi since 1976.

“The important thing that we are trying to do today is talk about the 40 years of achievement, the million hours that we have done," Mr Al Hammadi said. “That, by itself, gives you an indication this company will survive."

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