

Malaysia 'evaluating offers to make aircraft'

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MALAYSIA has received several offers for the construction of light aircraft and is evaluating them, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"We have to see whether it suits us before we make a decision," he said at the ground-breaking ceremony of the Composites Technology City (CTC) in Batu Berendam.

The CTC is being undertaken by Composites Technology Development Corporation, a joint venture company comprising Composites Technology Research Malaysia Sdn Bhd and Ikhlas Perdana Sdn Rhd, a subsidiary of FACB Bhd.

The project, covering 200ha, will propel Malaysia to world-attention as a lightweight components technology centre for three global industries: aerospace, maritime and automobile.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had no intention of competing with the big aircraft manufacturers but only aimed to contribute towards the aircraft industry by producing some parts for the industry in the United States.

"We have set ourselves a target of becoming a developed country by the year 2020 but we are used to doing things very quickly," he said.

Earlier, Chief Minister Tan Sri Rahim Tamby Chik urged Dr Mahathir to upgrade the Batu Berendam airport to international status to cater to the expanding needs of the nearby industries.

However, Dr Mahathir said that since the opening of the North-South Expressway, there had been a drop in air passenger traffic to Ipoh, Penang and Johor Baru as more people preferred to travel by car.

He added that Malacca should choose whether it wanted the industry or the airport.