

Japanese firm may help in our aerospace industry, says Dr M

By G. Danapal

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — A Japanese company manufacturing composite materials for aircraft firms in Europe and the United States has indicated it will study the possibility of helping to develop Malaysia's budding aerospace industry.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the company, Shinmewa, produced composite materials for European and American aerospace firms like McDonnell Douglas and Boeing Corporation.

Dr Mahathir who visited the Japanese plant in Osaka after attending the Apec meeting said:

"Since we are interested in developing the sector in the manufacture of composite materials for aircraft, I took the opportunity to visit the plant to see if there is anything that we can learn from them or persuade them to come over here... They said they will study (the matter)."

He was speaking to reporters on arrival at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang tonight after attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) forum in Osaka.

On hand to welcome him and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, several Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

Malaysia took the first step in its foray into composite materials manufacturing by acquiring in 1993 an Australian firm, Eagle Aircraft Australia, which produces the all-composite Eagle XTS two-seater light aircraft.

Malaysia acquired the technology by setting up Composite Technology Research Malaysia which

pumped in US\$22 million (RM56.32 million) for the project, and under the joint venture agreement there would be two plants to manufacture the aircraft in Australia and Batu Berendam in Malacca.

On the just-concluded Apec forum, Dr Mahathir described it as "good" and despite some problems, Malaysia stood by its decisions on the need for tariff cuts and reductions in order to open the market.

Commenting on a report that he only decided to at-

tend the Osaka leaders' meeting about a week before it started, he said this was because some of the leaders had imposed various conditions as a prerequisite to attend meetings.

"I was not happy with them imposing such conditions... and that if the conditions are not accepted they will not be attending the meetings. That was why I took time to decide whether to attend the meeting."

At the informal summit, Dr Mahathir and 17 other Apec leaders or their repre-

sentatives adopted an action agenda to liberalise trade and investment for the next 25 years.

He also held talks with Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, Thai Prime Minister Banharn Silpa Archa, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and Dr Koo Chen Fu, the special adviser to Taiwanese President Lee Teng Hui.

Most of the 18 leaders made some sort of "down payment" and endorsed a plan to liberalise trade and investment, promising tar-

iff cuts and deregulation measures and also drew up a 78-page "Action Agenda," with target dates for lowering tariffs, eliminating non-tariff barriers, cutting through red tape and making trading regimes more transparent.

Apec is a grouping of Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States.