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Govt to spend RM100m to upgrade MiG-29 fleet

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday witnessed two signing of agreements to upgrade the capabilities of the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF)'s fleet of MiG-29 fighter aircraft.

The Government will spend RM100 million on the upgrading exercise, which will be undertaken by Aerospace Technology Systems Corp Sdn Bhd (ATSC) in collaboration with the Moscow Aircraft Production Organisation "MiG" (Mapo MiG), the aircraft manufacturer and the Russian State Corporation Rosvoorouzhnie.

The contract for the upgrading works was sealed under the two agreements signed between the Finance Ministry and the ATSC, as well as between the ATSC and Mapo MiG and the State Corporation Rosvoorouzhnie.

The signing ceremony was held in conjunction with the Prime Minister's visit to the TechXchange '97 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar and Russia's Ambassador in Malaysia to Vitalay Vorobyev.

According to ATSC general manager Brig Gen (R) Datuk Richard Robless, the upgrading of the single-seater MiG will start in January next year.

"The value of the contract is about RM100 million. The project will take about 18 months to complete," he told reporters after the signing ceremony.

Under the agreement, the ATSC will undertake the modification work of the MiG-29 aircraft at its aircraft maintenance complex in Kuantan.

The modification works entail the incorporation of aerial refuelling capabilities and the enhancement of various systems.

The exercise will also involve the upgrading of the radar and the fitting of mid-air refuelling probes on the MiG-29 aircraft.

In the signing of the first agreement, the Finance Ministry was represented by government procurement management division secretary, Datuk Dr Mohd Shahar Sidek, and the ATSC by its chairman Datuk Azizan Hussain.

For the second agreement, Mapo MiG deputy director-general Trifonov Victor Petrovich signed on behalf of the company, and the State Corporation was represented by Mr Skoibeeda Vassili Vladimirovich.

The ATSC was established in June 1994 after a memorandum of understanding signed between the Malaysian Government, Russian State Corporation for Export and Import of Armament and Military Equipment, and Mapo MiG.

Ministry of Finance Inc owns 70 per cent stake in the joint venture, Mapo MiG 25 per cent and the Russian State Corporation 5 per cent.

In 1994, Malaysia purchased 18 MiG-29 fighter jets from Russia worth more than RM1 billion.

The four-day exhibition and conference on Russian technology (TechXchange '97), organised by Le Proton Exhibition, Novotek Group, the Malaysian Industry-Government for High Technology (Might) and Russian-based Machinoexport, ends today.

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