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Mahathir-Blueprint

MALAYSIA'S AEROSPACE BLUEPRINT LAUNCHED

LANGKAWI, Dec 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today launched the much-awaited Blueprint for the Development of the Malaysian Aerospace Industry to make the country's aerospace industry one that will be "globally-competitive and widely acknowledged".

Using the ongoing fourth Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima '97) Exhibition, here, as the launching pad for the blueprint, he also announced, among others, the formation of a high-level committee led by himself and the upgrading of the Department of the Civil Aviation (DCA) to strengthen the industry.

The Malaysian Agency for Space Administration (Masa) would also be formed to spur Malaysia's entry into the space sector.

Stressing that the aerospace industry could not afford to be too divergent and fragmented, he said it was imperative that the industry adopt the national vision as its main thrust and approach the aerospace development task on a consolidated basis.

"This will provide a nationally consistent framework for identifying and evaluating key initiatives to be developed," he said when launching the blueprint which he had proposed during Lima '95, here.

For a start, Dr Mahathir said, the blueprint, which was completed last year and endorsed by the Cabinet last September, recommended the establishment of a national level Steering Committee to oversee the development of the aerospace industry.

This committee in the form of a national aerospace council would make key decisions in the areas of directions, priorities and strategies for the industry, he said.

The prime minister said the council would adopt the "Smart Partnership" principles with the participation of leaders from both the public and private sectors.

He said the MIGHT Interest Group (MIG) in Aerospace, the study team set up to look into the formulation of the blueprint, had requested that the prime minister and deputy prime minister be the chairman and deputy chairman of the council respectively.

This, he said, would be considered by the government.

In addition to the council, the government also supported the idea of a national aerospace coordinating body to act as a reference point for the various aerospace activities and investments.

The new body will consolidate the current national initiatives in the aerospace sector and further spearhead Malaysia's involvement in the industry.

"It will become the reference point for the managing of offset programmes and act as an intermediary for local and foreign interests in the industry," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that taking into account the industry expansion into new and unexplored territory of aerospace activities, the existing DCA would have to be upgraded.

The proposed Civil Aviation Authority, he said, would provide the industry with a monitoring as well as regulatory function in the areas of airworthiness, air traffic control and aerospace product/services.

The prime minister also announced that a National Human Resource Development Programme would be put in place to ensure adequate and competitive skills and costs of personnel.

He said it would take into account the various categories of labour required in the aerospace industry such as toolmakers, aircraft engineers, test pilots and systems analysts.

Malaysia also hopes to establish a premier educational centre for aerospace which will serve the domestic as well as the regional need for education and training.

"The aerospace industry houses the most complex core technologies which are applicable to other industries and provide critical technologies for the future.

"It provides a gateway to technological acquisition and therefore it is essential that these technologies acquired through procurement and offset would help the nation to gain access to a foreign market and fully realise our national competitive advantage," he said.

On Masa, Dr Mahathir said it would ensure the efficient management of the country's space venture which included the development of a national satellite programme where it could help to develop the industrial and technology capability in this area.

The prime minister said that for the successful implementation of the key programmes, the industry must be equally supported by policies which are both rational and enhancing.

"A national procurement policy which emphasises local products/services and technology will ensure a sustainable economic development and reduce import and financial outflow," he said, adding that this policy was important in the procurement of military equipment, privatisation projects and offset programmes.

Dr Mahathir said the focus of the recommendations in the blueprint was on the government because it set the legislative framework and policy.

"However, the success of the industry will be a responsibility that goes much farther than the government. Action and participation are required of all the stakeholders.

"If we can achieve all that is set out in this blueprint, Malaysia will have an aerospace industry that will be globally-competitive and widely acknowledged as what has been achieved by our electronics and automotive industry," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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