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Plan for aerospace industry in final stages

MALAYSIA is in the final stages of preparing a national strategic plan to ensure the orderly and systematic development of its aerospace industry.

"This plan, apart from providing future direction for the industry, will also consider the acquisition of technology, infrastructural needs and manpower requirements," Defence Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday.

The Government would work with the local aerospace and foreign companies to build up a comprehensive aerospace industry, he added.

He said the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace show was significant as it would enable local companies to keep pace with the rapid technological advancements in the maritime and aerospace industries.

Syed Hamid said this at the opening of the fourth biennial Lima show at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the Lima series of shows would also open up possibilities of collaborative arrangements between local and major global aerospace firms.

He noted that the Government had already taken steps to put in place some of the infrastructure needed for the growth of the aerospace industry.

These include the move to convert Subang airport into an aviation park once the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang was operational.

"This site will be suitable for all kinds of aerospace activities," said Syed Hamid.

The five main areas of aerospace activities now are overhaul and maintenance, manufacture and assembly of light aircraft, manufacture of parts and components, modification and conversion work, and the manufacturing of composite parts.

He said the overhaul and maintenance activities could be expanded.

He proposed that local companies involved in overhaul and maintenance study the setting up of facilities for the repair of engines, parts and components. He was also satisfied with the move by Malaysian firms to venture into hi-tech aerospace activities such as systems integration and simulator development.

"But the various developments in the aerospace industry so far are on an hoc basis, which is not encouraging for its future orderly development."

On the maritime industry, he said, the Government wanted the private sector to continue investing in such areas as port development, shipbuilding and repairs.

He added that Malaysian ports must improve their efficiency and provide more cost-effective services in the face of increasing cargo volume and competition.

The Government, on its part, is constantly looking at ways to improve operational efficiency, he said.

Syed Hamid added that the Government would welcome any move by the world's major aerospace and maritime companies to form smart partnerships with local firms.

"We especially welcome those who are sincere in helping us develop our aerospace and maritime industries through collaborative arrangements and meaningful transfer of technology," he said.

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