

02/12/1997

PM to announce initiatives to develop aerospace industry

LANGKAWI, Mon. - The fourth Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace show, which begins tomorrow, will not only see a fair share of wheeling and dealing and spectacular aerial display, but also the much awaited announcement by the Government on new initiatives to develop the aerospace industry.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who announced at Lima '95 that the Government was preparing a national aerospace blueprint, is expected to release the details on Friday.

It is learnt that the Cabinet had approved the blueprint at its weekly meeting on Sept 17.

Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar confirmed that Dr Mahathir was expected to make a major announcement on the future growth and development of the aerospace industry.

"We believe that the industry, together with our current efforts to build up the information technology sector, will boost the country's economy, and propel the nation into the 21st century," he told the New Straits Times at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre, the venue of the aerospace segment of Lima '97.

The NST has learnt that the key players in the aerospace industry, regulatory agencies and related Government agencies on the committee of the Malaysian Industry Government Group for High Technology in the Prime Minister's Department had given their recommendations on what should be the national policy on aerospace development.

Meanwhile, about 20 signing ceremonies are being lined up over the next five days at the maritime and aerospace shows.

As Syed Hamid spoke, exhibitors and workers were putting the final touches to their booths, before the official opening tomorrow by Dr Mahathir.

Up to 6pm today, some 620 exhibitors from 40 countries have confirmed that they are taking part in the aerospace show, while over at Tanjung Malai, the venue for the maritime segment, 170 companies from 17 countries have confirmed their participation.

Le Proton LIMA Sdn Bhd is organising the aerospace show while Huswah Exhibition Sdn Bhd is responsible for the maritime segment.

Of the 20 signing ceremonies, eight will be held at the MIEC and the rest at Tanjung Malai.

Malaysia Airlines chairman Tajudin Ramli will sign an agreement to purchase a Boeing Business Jet, a joint venture between Boeing Commercial Airplane Company and General Electric.

The aircraft is expected to cost more than RM110 million in its unfurnished configuration. The signing ceremony is set for tomorrow.

Composite Technologies Research Malaysia is also expected to announce several major deals on Friday involving production of composite materials in the aviation and automobile sectors.

The NST has learnt that two of the deals involve Proton and Lockheed Martin.

Sources said the agreement with Proton would see CTRM producing components for the two-seater Lotus Elise for the local and export markets.

It is understood that production will take place at CTRM's facility in Malacca in the first quarter of next year.

This deal will be very significant for CTRM which seeks to diversify and develop its composite manufacturing business.

The deal with Lockheed Martin will allow CTRM to be involved in production and repair of composite aircraft engine components.

It is understood that the agreement will initially involve the maintenance of some parts of commercial aircraft engines.

CTRM will also announce the sale of two of its Eagle 150 aircraft to the Royal Selangor Flying Club.

This is also an important breakthrough for CTRM which has been trying to penetrate the local market for twin-seat light airplanes.

Sapura Thomson Radiocommunications Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of local telecommunications giant, Sapura, will launch its own tactical radio communications for the Armed Forces, on Wednesday.

Dectra, a wholly-owned Malaysian Information Technology company, will sign a memorandum of understanding with Australia-based Mincom Pty Ltd on Wednesday to develop and implement an integrated software for the management of capital-intensive industries.

The system provides comprehensive solutions to problems pertaining to supply, equipment and maintenance and financial management to improve the logistics management systems for the Malaysian armed forces.

SGT Industries, a joint venture company between Malaysian and British entities, will also launch a two-seat light airplane, the Streak Shadow.

At the maritime division, four major deals will be announced on Friday, with three of them involving Penang Shipbuilding Corporation, a subsidiary of Business Focus.

The first agreement between PSC-Naval Dockyard Sdn Bhd and British Aerospace Royal Ordnance will see the former being appointed as the marketing agents for the BAe Ordnance 105mm field artillery.

The agreement also provides PSC with the rights to manufacture the field guns locally, under the name Sakti.

The second agreement involves PSC Defence Technology and Aeroinvest on Missiles Weapon Technology, while the third agreement is between PSC-Naval Dockyard and Power Magnetics and Electronics Systems to establish electronic systems support and consultancy service.

The fourth agreement in the maritime sector involves Destination Marine Services Sdn Bhd and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia to manufacture high speed patrol boats.

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