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Aerospace blueprint to be launched today

TWO proposed bodies, modelled along the lines of the National Information Technology Council and the Multimedia Development Corporation, will be set up for the aerospace industry.

The first will be a high-level direction and policy structure while the other will be more of a coordinating and management one.

It is understood that these are some of the proposals contained in the National Aerospace Blueprint, which will be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Malaysia Industry Group for High Technology (MiGHT) chief executive Dr Ahmed Tasir Lope Pihie, when met at the last day of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) 1997 aerospace conference, refused to elaborate further on the matter but said that "a pro-tem committee will be set up to follow through the recommendations made in the blueprint".

MiGHT is spearheading the country's entry into the aerospace and aviation industry through the Malaysia Industry Group (MIG) Aerospace whose chairman is Malaysia Airlines executive chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli.

Tajudin is also the joint chairman of MiGHT.

When pressed further, Ahmed Tasir said there is a necessity for the setting up of a high-level direction and policy structure for the industry. So is the institutionalisation of a coordinating and management body.

When asked on the composition of members of the two proposed bodies, he said: "Members will comprise those from the academia and technocrats. We (MiGHT) have always stressed on equal government-industry participation."

It is understood that there will also be sub-working groups in the various aspects of the aerospace industry.

It was two years ago at Lima 1995 that Dr Mahathir announced the formulation of a blueprint for the aerospace industry.

The MIG Aerospace undertook a "purely in-house, inter-industry kind of participation" to gather consensus on the proposed blueprint as opposed to engaging foreign consultants to undertake the work.

Reports said the blueprint will, among other things, includes the country's long-term plan for its own space launch vehicle and spaceport that will serve the Asean region. The eventual goal is for an Asean agency equivalent to the European Space Agency.

In fact, some of the aerospace activities already undertaken in the country are said to be some of those outlined in the blueprint. These include the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) type certification of two Malaysian-made aircraft namely the SME Aerospace's all-metal Aerotiga and Composite Technology Research Malaysia (CTRM) all-composite, two seater Eagle.

The signing of the Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreement between Malaysia and the US recently also sees the global acceptance of 129 locally-manufactured aircraft components and parts.

Earlier when asked if proposals outlined under the National Aerospace Blueprint will run aground due to the economic situation in the country, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the private sector will play a role in the effective implementation of proposals in the blueprint.

He said that the aerospace industry had been identified as a key industry to promote under the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

He also said an experimental aircraft - designed and manufactured by Eurodynamics Sdn Bhd, Association of Malaysia Airlines Licensed Engineers and MAS Aerotechnologies - will undertake its flight test on December 21.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said after viewing the aircraft at the Malaysia Airlines hospitality chalet at the aerospace segment at Lima '97 that the move augurs well, especially in view of the Government's move to encourage the flying culture.

Later when closing the aerospace conference, Dr Ling said although aviation and aerospace is seen as a high risk, capital intensive venture, Malaysia wants a share of the global industry which is already experiencing sales turnover far in excess of US$200 billion (US$1 = RM3.68) a year.

Furthermore, the huge demand for aircraft by Asia Pacific countries estimated at one-qurter of the 15,000 aircraft or US$400 billion in value by the year 2014 creates tremendous opportunities for offset work, flight training, repair and maintenance of aircraft engines as well as the manufacture and assembly of airframe parts and components, he said.

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