

16/02/1998

20 in aerospace council shortlist

Sabry Sharif; Adrian David

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The 20 members of the National Aerospace Council, who will be the brains behind the development of the multi-billion ringgit aerospace industry, have been shortlisted.

Membership is expected to reflect the Smart partnership and synergy between government support and private sector initiative needed to transform the aerospace industry into a major economic activity in the next millennium.

Industry sources said the 20 names were canvassed from six government ministries and agencies, and 24 local aviation firms.

On the shortlist are Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamad, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Senior civil servants are likely to be Economic Planning Unit director-general Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali and Royal Malaysian Air Force chief Lt Jen Datuk Seri Ahmad Saruji Che Rose.

The aerospace industry is expected to be represented by Malaysia Airlines chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli and Aerospace Industries of Malaysia chairman Datuk Ahmad Johan.

An official with the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology, which is responsible for drawing up the list, would only say that the line-up would be sent to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for approval.

"We have put together key players from the public and private sectors ... The list should be presented to the Prime Minister early next month," said the official.

Each participant will carry his own knowledge and experience of the industry, ranging from the regulatory process to business potential.

The New Straits Times has learnt that the secretaries-general of the Defence, Transport, Education, Entrepreneur Development, Human Resources, and Science, Technology and Environment Ministries, and the directors-general of the newly set-up Civil Aviation Authority and Malaysian Agency for Space Administration are also likely to be nominated for membership.

Representatives of the major components of the aerospace industry - general aviation, overhaul and servicing, aircraft component manufacturing and assembly - are expected to be in the council.

The NST understands that among the top industry representatives are senior officers of SME Technology (the Government-backed aircraft component manufacturing and assembly firm based in Sungai Buloh, Selangor), Malaysian Helicopter Services and Sabah Air.

Said an industry source, who is familiar with the selection process: "The MIGHT team wants to have people who are in touch with the operations of the industry to guide the growth of the sector."

MIGHT is led by co-chairmen Tajudin and the Science Adviser to the Prime Minister, Tan Sri Omar Abdul Rahman.

The council's first meeting is expected to be held here at the end of this month. Dr Mahathir is expected to attend the inaugural session.

The council is expected to report to the Cabinet.

"Being small players, the council cannot survive on its own with existing avenues. It needs to expand its scope progressively through

offset programmes," said an industry source.

The council will be autonomous through an initial government grant, and be self-financing thereafter.

It will be entrusted with setting up the National Aerospace Working Committee, comprising members of the private and public sectors, which will implement the council's decisions.

The committee will be headed by a high-ranking figure from the private or public sector and will have autonomy in implementing the national aerospace blueprint.

The 45-point blueprint, launched by Dr Mahathir at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition in December, will be made available to the public next month.

It consists of six key components which will form the framework for the aerospace industry.

The idea is to ensure that training and education programmes are undertaken soon, to groom enough indigenous professionals like engineers and technicians by the year 2020.

Industry sources said MIGHT prepared the blueprint using its own resources with assistance from major foreign aerospace players.

Among the salient features of the blueprint is the setting up of the National Aerospace Co-ordinating Body, which will function like an independent company and headed by a chief executive officer.

This committee will co-ordinate all aerospace projects including identifying and nurturing local companies with the capacity to go into manufacturing of aerospace components and provision of aviation-related services.

(END)