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DR MAHATHIR INAUGURATES EXPORT OF MALAYSIA-MADE SME MD3-160 PLANE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today launched the maiden delivery of the Malaysia-made multi-purpose two-seater plane, the SME MD3-160, ordered by the United States.

The ceremony was held at the premises of the aircraft manufacturer, SME Aviation in Subang near here.

Company officials said the SME MD3-160, a trainer-cum-recreational-cum-aerobatic plane, is also the first Asia-made aircraft certified exportable to the US under a Malaysia-US Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreement (Basa).

Initially, two MD3-160s would be delivered to the US.

The company had projected that more than 100 units of the aircraft, marketed as "Aerotiga", would be sold in the US in three years.

Upon arrival in the US, a Florida-based joint venture company, SME Aero Inc, which is marketing the planes, would send the two units to the customers, officials said.

Each plane costs between US\$150,000 and US\$200,000 (US\$1=RM3.80).

The MD3-160 is also type-certified by the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation (Foca), the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and Indonesia's Directorate-General of Air Communications (DGAC).

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