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Malaysia pushing ahead to develop aerospace sector

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MALAYSIA is pushing ahead with plans under a national blueprint launched late last year to develop its aerospace industry, despite the economic weather now.

Nearly half a year after it announced the establishment of the Malaysian Aerospace Council, the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT) last weekend disclosed to Business Times the proposed structure of the country's aerospace industry, as contained in the Blueprint for the Aerospace Industry in Malaysia.

The setting up of the council was seen as a first step towards implementing the 45-point blueprint, which was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last year, but little else of the document or the council has been reported since.

MIGHT said members to sit on the council, which Dr Mahathir will chair, are in the process of being identified.

According to the blueprint, the council will be aided by the a National Aerospace Coordinating Body. The Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) will take on added tasks and will be known as the Malaysian Aviation Authority.

The establishment of the council, the coordinating body and the authority as an integral part of the national aerospace industry structure comes under the Framework for Aerospace Industry in Malaysia, which is one of the 45 recommendations contained in the blueprint.

"The council will further the development of the aerospace industry by making key decisions in the areas of priorities and strategies," said the blueprint.

MIGHT will serve as the secretariat of the council to ensure a private sector-led consultative platform. It will also manage the National Aerospace Coordinating Body, which will act as a reference point for the various aerospace initiatives, activities and investments.

The coordinating body will consolidate the current initiatives in the aerospace sector and further spearhead Malaysia's involvement in the industry. Its main functions will be to provide a reference point for the management of offset programmes, act as an intermediate for local and foreign interests in the aerospace industry, establish a detailed inventory of local aerospace players and regulate the key players.

Under the proposed structure, five major groups of civil and military operators - Malaysia Airlines, Malaysia Airports Bhd, Defence/Security Forces, general aviation companies, and other companies - will play a major role in the industry.

There will also be an aerospace intelligence unit "parked" under the National Aerospace Coordinating Body, which will monitor critical and strategic international developments in aerospace and aviation.

At the same time, the blueprint said the proposed Malaysia Aviation Authority - modelled along the lines of the Civil Aviation Authority in the UK - will take over the role of the DCA.

The Malaysia Aviation Authority will ensure adequate regulatory and strategic support for the development of the local aerospace industry.

It would be an autonomous body, managed by a board comprising members from the industry and government.

"The Malaysia Aviation Authority will not only regulate but lead and support the changing demands of the aerospace industry instead of only fulfilling its traditional function of serving the aviation industry," the

blueprint said.

Might said Malaysia possesses the basic ingredients for achieving a competitive advantage in the aerospace industry but it needs to "urgently restructure and enhance its competencies to excel in the aerospace industry."

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