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Two locally-made aircraft for export to US

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - SME Technologies Sdn Bhd, a high-precision machining and manufacturing company, will export two made-in-Malaysia SME MD3-160 twin-seater aircraft to the United States next month.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said they were the first aircraft to have been made under the Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreement that was signed between Malaysia and the US Federal Aviation Authority in 1996.

"This BASA agreement allows us to manufacture aircraft and parts according to international standards under the supervision of our Department of Civil Aviation in collaboration with FAA.

"The SME MD3-160 is also the first Malaysian-made aircraft to be certified by the DCA for export to the United States.

"Once it has been accepted by the United States, it will be accepted worldwide," he told reporters after a post-Cabinet meeting today.

Dr Ling said the ministry met with several interested buyers for the locally-made metal aircraft yesterday and was confident of making more sales.

"Each aircraft costs between US\$150,000 (RM570,000) and US\$200,000 depending on the customers' configuration."

Dr Ling said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had agreed to launch the two aircraft at the SME Aviation Sdn Bhd plant in Subang on a scheduled date, before they are dismantled and placed into containers to be transported to Port Klang.

From there, they would be shipped to a Malaysian joint-venture company, SME Aero Inc which is based in Tallahassee, for delivery to its clients.

He said the local aircraft manufacturer was presently building 30 aircraft for the Royal Malaysian Air Force and the Indonesian Government which had placed an order for 20 such aircraft.

Ten of them have already been delivered to the RMAF while the rest were expected to be ready for delivery by 1999.

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