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Aerospace sector ready for take-off

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MALAYSIAN company Aero Technologies Sdn Bhd has joined the ranks of the world's aerospace manufacturers after it won a contract to manufacture wing components for the Airbus A300 aircraft.

The milestone contract which was concluded at the recent Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace '99 exhibition also marks Malaysia's entry into the multi-billion dollar international commercial aircraft industry, which is dominated by Europe and North America.

Aero Technologies, a wholly owned subsidiary of Composites Technology Research Malaysia Sdn Bhd (CTRM), was given the contract by BAe Systems, which is one of the companies entrusted to build parts for the Airbus consortium.

CTRM chief operating officer George Blower said Aero Technologies would manufacture all the composite parts at its production plant in Malacca. The metal details of the parts will be subcontracted to SME Aerotechnologies Sdn Bhd.

The company will produce fixed trailing edges for the A300 aircraft and the initial contract is for the production of 55 sets of the parts.

The A300 was the first aircraft type to be rolled out from the Airbus stable in the 1960s, and is now available in its modern derivative, the A310 and A300-600.

The company was also invited to bid for the manufacture of additional wing components for Airbus aircraft, such as the ailerons for the A319, A320 and A321 series.

This may prove to be a lucrative deal for Aero Technologies as these Airbus series are among the best selling commercial aircraft types in the world. Airbus produces about 24 a month.

The future seems to be bright for Aero Technologies as at Lima '99, representatives from Airbus Industrie approached them to negotiate further collaboration in parts manufacturing.

Essentially, they have invited Aero Technologies to bid for the contract to supply trailing edge panels for vertical stabilisers for the A319, A320 and A321 series.

CTRM sees the manufacturing project as a stepping stone to bidding for projects under Airbus' mega A3XX Programme.

And with last week's announcement from Airbus that it was going ahead to developing the mammoth super-jumbo liner, despite strong arguments from competitors Boeing that there is no market for it, CTRM is in a good position to grab a piece of the market.

BAe Systems which was launched at Lima '99 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad after the conclusion of the merger between British Aerospace and Marconi Electronic Systems has indicated that it aims to secure a bigger stake in Airbus Industrie.

This could only mean a stronger chance of CTRM to secure more important Airbus contracts.

Aero Technologies is the manufacturing arm of CTRM. The company produces advance composite components using state-of-the-art equipment and machinery.

CTRM, through Aero Technologies, has been tasked to spearhead the nation's composites industry.

The company began operations in October 1997 as a supplier of composite components to its sister company, Eagle Aircraft Pty Ltd, based in

Australia, which manufactures all-composite, two-seater Eagle 150 light aircraft.

Aero Technologies has also raised its production capability and capacity to gain most of EAPL's advance composite components requirements. This includes the Eagle 150 flight controls such as flaps and ailerons, as well as the all important aircraft tailcone and wings. ACT anticipates commencing supply of the Eagle 150 fuselage by the first quarter of 2000.

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