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MAHATHIR-AEROSPACE

DR M: LOCAL AEROSPACE INDUSTRY NOW ACCEPTED INTERNATIONALLY

LANGKAWI, Dec 2 (Bernama) -- The local aerospace industry has gained international recognition as more companies are being contracted to do work for major airframe manufacturers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The prime minister said, "Our aerospace manufacturing centre has been able to achieve international recognition with orders now of over US40 million."

He said these big companies accepted the kind of quality of work that was being done here and they were willing to let Malaysians do some of the more sophisticated work.

"The manufacturers have faith in the kind of work that is being done here," he said.

An example was the stretching of the Lockheed Hercules C-130 tactical transport aircraft, he told a press conference after launching the Malaysian Aerospace Industries Association (MAIA) at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre here.

"That is being done now at two centres throughout the world other than at Lockheed itself...ours is going to be the third such centre and for the avionics upgrade we are going to be the first," he said.

The six-day Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) exposition began on Nov 30. The maritime segment is organised by HW LIMA while the aerospace sector is being managed by LIMA Le Proton.

The show, which attracted some 1,000 local, regional and international companies, was opened yesterday by Dr Mahathir.

During a tour of Malaysian aerospace companies at the show, the prime minister successfully landed a PC-7 turbo prop aircraft on Langkawi International Airport. He was in the cockpit of a computerised image simulator.

Earlier in his speech during the MAIA launching at Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre here, Dr Mahathir said the workscope of the country's aerospace manufacturing sector has expanded tremendously from small aircraft parts to bigger and more complex parts.

He said Malaysia's international customer base has also expanded and now covered the entire spectrum, including military and commercial aircraft, space and satellite equipment.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had intensified its activities in capability development which encompasses Structural or Service Life Extension Programmes, Systems Upgrade and Modification, Avionics Upgrade and Systems Integration, and Aircraft Stretch Mode.

All these, he said, were the trend of the future as the cost of acquiring new aircraft in the future was getting more expensive, if not astronomical, and many countries including the West were now extending the service life of their present aircraft through such programmes.

"It is also strategic in the sense that should we ourselves require such programmes for the Royal Malaysian Air Force or Armed Forces, then the expertise is already home grown and available in the country," he added. --

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