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Private sector urged to play role in aerospace

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the time has come for the private sector and individual entrepreneurs to take the government's role to lead in developing the aerospace industry.

"This industry requires heavy capital investment and a long gestation period. For this reason, it is only right that the Government takes the initiative to lead in developing this industry.

"The opportunities are there for you to further develop and the Government will continue to provide assistance to ensure its growth and success," he said in congratulating the Malaysian Aerospace Industries Association (MAIA) at its launching ceremony during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) show 1999 in Langkawi yesterday.

He said the local aerospace industry has made significant progress over two years, having achieved international recognitions and orders of over US\$40 million (US\$1 = RM3.80).

The workscope has expanded tremendously from small aircraft parts to bigger and more complex parts being made. International customer base has also expanded and now covers the entire spectrum including military and commercial aircraft, space and satellite equipment.

"Aerospace industry is a very technology-intensive industry and is thus suitable for the nation with a fast growing skilled labour force. This industry involves the most complex core technologies which are applicable to all other industries and provide critical technologies for the future.

"It is therefore important that we succeed not only for our own economic growth but also to contribute towards our competence in high technology businesses," he said.

MAIA president Tan Sri Ahmad Johan, who is also the president of Airod, said the association is aimed at providing a platform for the Malaysian aerospace industries, institutions of higher learning and research institutes.

The association's objectives, among others, are to promote and protect the activities of the local aerospace industries, encourage research and development with local universities, research institutes and the local aerospace industries.

"By having such an association, the local aerospace industries can now work with common mission, which MAIA can strongly promote the local expertise, technological know-how and capabilities to the world's aerospace companies," he added. There are 25 members in MAIA.

Following the launching of the association, Dr Mahathir witnessed the signing ceremony of four contracts and one partnership agreement between local and foreign companies.

SME Aerospace signed separate contracts with BAE Systems, Alenia Aerospazio and Shinmaywa Industries of Japan while the fourth contract was between the Malaysian Government and Airod Sdn Bhd on the Royal Malaysia Air Force C-130H Hercules Aircraft Upgrade Programme.

The contract between SME aerospace and BAE Systems is for the manufacture of BAe Regional Jet Aircraft parts, while the one with Alenia Aerospazio is for the manufacture of Alenia aircraft forward lower lobe assembly. The contract between SME Aerospace and Shinmaywa Industries is for the manufacture of machined parts of Boeing 757 and 767 aircraft.

Meanwhile, Composite Technology Research Malaysia and BAE Systems signed

a partnership agreement for the production of composite aircraft components for Airbus Industrie.

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