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AEROSPACE-YAMAZAKI

MAHATHIR VISITS CYBER FACTORY, SME AEROSPACE BUYS HIGH-TECH MACHINES

By: Ghazemy Mahmud

NAGOYA, June 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's aircraft parts maker SME Aerospace today signed an agreement for the purchase of state-of-the-art computerised tooling machines, worth RM11.5 million, from Yamazaki Mazak Corporation.

The contract for 10 computer numeric control (CNC) machines would be primarily dedicated to fulfilling a contract between SME Aerospace and BAE Systems, which was expected to be awarded by the end of this month for the production of Boeing 767 parts, SME Aerospace said.

"The `parts' contract value is about RM90 million for 10 years. This value will increase to RM200 million once SME Aerospace is ready to take on more jobs," SME Aerospace said in a statement at the signing ceremony at the headquarters of Yamazaki Mazak Corporation here.

The machine purchase contract signing, witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is currently on a working visit, was participated by SME Industries group managing director Tan Sri Ahmad Johan and Mazak's executive vice president Tony Yamazaki.

CNC machines, especially Mazak's five-axis machining centre, played an important role in such jobs, the SME Aerospace statement said. SME Aerospace is a subsidiary of SME Industries.

Mazak's contract included technical support to enable SME Aerospace to optimise the machines fully, the statement said.

It was reported that Malaysia was poised to become a major aerospace components maker within the next five years to grab a share of the world market in this high-tech business.

Tan Sri Ahmad Johan, who is also president of Airod, said the industry would be boosted by another contract worth RM700 million with the same UK-based company in the next couple of months.

The statement said BAE system was seriously considering Malaysia in producing the wing of the new RJX Regional jet that was launched earlier this year.

"The negotiations are at the final stage now. The BAE system team will be in Kuala Lumpur at the end of this month to finalise the agreement," it said.

"The job will not only give Malaysia the benefit but more importantly, it will propel Malaysia to be the top aerospace centre in South East Asia," the statement added.

Dr Mahathir arrived here earlier today to begin his week-long working visit to Japan. Soon after arrival, he toured Mazak's high-tech facility and visited the cyber factory - the first of its kind in the world - where information technology and multimedia are utilised for maximum efficiency.

This is not the first time that SME Aerospace has produced precision machine parts for aircrafts as it had made parts for Boeings 757 and 767 under a smaller contract with Shin May Wa of Japan two years ago.

A Mazak company official said SME Aerospace was now a world player in aircraft component manufacturing.

On the development of the high-tech industry, he said cooperation with Malaysia would be continued.

Mazak, with plants in the UK and US, is the designer and manufacturer of one of the most modern tooling machines in the world using IT and multimedia technology. -- BERNAMA

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