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`Building and launching satellites by 2020'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - A working paper on developing space science studies in the country has been submitted to the Government with an expectation that Malaysia would be ready to build and launch its own satellites in 2020.

It is expected that the country will have the expertise by 2020 to launch commercial and military spacecrafts.

The paper, by the Institut Ibnu Sina of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, was handed over to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today at the end of an aerospace science convention held at the Palace of the Golden Horses here.

A resolution adopted at the two-day convention, organised by UTM and National Security Division of the Prime Minister's Department, was also handed to Dr Mahathir.

The space science studies comprises three stages, from Phase 1 (2001-2005) to Phase 3 (beyond 2020).

Under Phase 1, students are to conduct research in the fundamental fields with focus on three main fields - atmospheric science, space science and space communication.

Research activities under Phase 2 (2006-2010) will include other related agencies and the building of space science research complexes in selected places.

The highlight of the research programme is exploration of space, in addition to the launching of satellites and various integrated space research activities.

The total cost is estimated at RM94 million - RM15 million for building space science laboratories, RM19 million for instrumentation and RM60 million for research.

The resolution, meanwhile, outlined various areas needing attention of the Government.

It called for the direct involvement of scientists in the formulation of policies, planning, development and monitoring of the socio-economic development of the society and country.

On rewards, it felt Malaysian scientists should be given attractive incentives, salaries and career advancement.

Adequate funding should also be extended for research and development activities, with the amount on R&D be increased from 0.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent of the GDP.

The resolution also called for the number of science undergraduates to be increased as well as full funding for those pursuing post-degree courses.

Other proposals adopted included the need for a review on the science and mathematics curricula in schools and the training of teachers for these subjects.

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