

# SPACE VENTURE

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## M'sia and Russia to set up agency for technology co-operation

By **MERGAWATI ZULFAKAR**

**MOSCOW:** Malaysia and Russia have agreed to set up a joint aviation and space agency, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said both governments had discussed the matter during bilateral talks and agreed that an agency should be set up.

"There are prospects for co-operation in the area of aviation and space and we have agreed to set up an agency," he said during a question-and-answer session with Russian businessmen on Thursday. The Prime Minis-

ter did not give details when asked by a businessman on the possible exchange of high-tech products with Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not in a position to participate in the design and development of new aircraft and wanted to learn more from Russia.

"We have our own small aircraft but there are certain aspects of aeroplanes that we would like to learn from Russia.

"In fact, we are already producing components for passenger aircraft built by Boeing and Airbus. I think if we work together, it is possible for us to contribute to lowering the

cost of aircraft development and production in Russia.

"So, we are studying the possibility of co-operating with Russia in this field," he added.

It is learnt that a Malaysian company is producing components for Airbus wings. These components are highly specialised and the contract is estimated to be worth no less than RM500mil.

Another Malaysian company, SME-Aero, apart from undertaking maintenance of Boeing aircraft, produces components for the US-based aircraft manufacturer. The seven-year contract includes producing

parts worth RM200mil.

SME-Aero is expected to get the boost of another contract worth RM700mil for Boeing components.

Asked by another businessman on the establishment of direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Moscow, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia Airlines was willing to consider.

"Initially, I think the best way is for tour agents in Russia to get as many tourists as possible and send them by chartered flights

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# More Malaysian students expected to study in Russia

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to Malaysia.

"When we have a sufficient number of passengers, then both MAS and Aeroflot will be able to have flights between the two cities," he said.

On Thursday, Dr Mahathir met some 90 Malaysians who were studying or working in Moscow.

During the meeting, he advised them to return and serve in Malaysia first because the country did not have enough medical professionals. He expected the number of Malaysian students in Russia to increase as the Government had recognised its medical degrees.

In another development, Malaysia and Russia have agreed to set up a joint economic commission and the Malaysia-Russia Business

Council to facilitate expected growth in bilateral trade and economic ties.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said yesterday the high-level discussions between leaders of both countries on Thursday had added further impetus to the growing relations.

Rafidah said Russian President Vladimir Putin had indicated that his country was ready to take part in the hydroelectric power project in Bakun.

Putin also accepted Dr Mahathir's invitation to visit Malaysia in October.

Both governments also want to increase bilateral trade to US\$500mil (RM1.9bil) yearly from the present US\$300mil (RM1.1bil), which is in Russia's favour.