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Government may buy new aircraft models for MAS

MALACCA, Thurs. - The Government is seriously considering acquiring new models of aircraft for Malaysia Airlines.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia Airlines did not own any aircraft as it was now only an operator.

"We will acquire some aircraft, for instance, the Airbus A380, or some other models of Airbus for our airlines to further enhance its performance."

The Prime Minister said the Government was considering the acquisition of aircraft with superior performance.

Speaking at the RM800 million signing agreement between Airbus and Composite Technology Research Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Dr Mahathir said Airbus had agreed that CTRM would design and manufacture fixed leading edge lower panels for the A380 model.

The A380 is the largest commercial aircraft in the world which can accommodate 555 passengers and crew.

Dr Mahathir was on a one-day visit to the State.

His wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali had separate programmes, including opening the Bistari mini stadium in Ayer Keroh and visiting Taman Heliconia in Kelemak, Alor Gajah.

"I am very proud indeed that Airbus has put its faith and trust in CTRM and I am sure CTRM employees feel very honoured and satisfied."

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that CTRM would not let the company and the country down.

"We need to improve our skills. I always believe that we can do almost everything as 'Malaysia Boleh'."

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would like to work together with partners from other countries.

"We know we need to learn a lot more in many areas in the field of technology.

"I can give an assurance that Malaysia will give its fullest co-operation. Such a partnership will provide a win-win situation for all of us."

Dr Mahathir also expressed hope that more critical aircraft parts could be produced in the country.

"Who knows, maybe the whole wings and body of Airbus aircraft can be manufactured in Malaysia."

He added that the event marked another milestone in Malaysia's capability in aircraft production.

"This is the way we wish to go. However, we are not too adventurous to compete with you (Airbus).

"We will try and bring down your cost and will try to benefit you as much as you have benefited us. Malaysia is moving towards being a developed nation by 2020 and we are working with our foreign partners to achieve this."

Earlier in Selandar while visiting the 159ha Malacca tropical fruit farm, Dr Mahathir said there was no reason for the people, especially those in rural areas, to remain poor as the country had abundant natural resources and fertile land.

"There are no excuses at all ...there are lots of job opportunities that are attracting foreigners to our country.

"And the foreigners are still coming to our country. Why? Because some

of us are lazy and do not want to work. Our land is fertile and we do not experience major disasters like earthquakes or massive floods like other countries. We have all the privileges to lead a good, healthy life but all of us must be willing to work hard."

The Prime Minister added the Government, via the relevant authorities, including the Agriculture Ministry, would continue to introduce the latest in farming methods and technologies to improve the livelihood of farmers.

Dr Mahathir also said the Government would embark on more concerted efforts to produce enterprising farmers.

He also described the "glasshouse farming" as envisioned by Agriculture Minister Datuk Mohd Effendi Norwawi as viable.

"Whether we can do it or not, we must try.

"The Government is prepared to render assistance to interested parties and conduct research."

Dr Mahathir also opened Creative Technology Limited's subsidiary, Cubic Electronics Sdn Bhd.

Later he opened the RM8.5 million Hang Tuah Mall.