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Malaysia-Russia

M'RIA AND RUSSIA TO ENHANCE COOPERATION IN AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE
INDUSTRIES

KUALA LUMPUR, March 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's official visit to Russia this week is expected to see Malaysia proposing a wide range of investments that could take the form of joint ventures between the aerospace and defence industries of the two countries.

The prime minister, who will be in Russia on March 14 and 15, is likely to explore with his Russian counterpart the prospects for further economic linkages between Kuala Lumpur and Moscow.

He will also visit Germany and Poland as part of his nine-day visit to the three countries.

Among the areas where economic linkages are developing is Khabarovsk Territory in the Russian Far East.

The Kornsomolsk-on-Amur Aircraft Manufacturing Association, otherwise known as KnAAPO, is in Khabarovsk Krai.

The KnAAPO facilities were visited by Dr Mahathir during his trip to Russia in August 1999

KnAAPO is one of the major aircraft manufacturers in Russia and the Asia-Pacific region, producing an array of Sukhoi Su-27, Su-30, Su-33, Su-30MK and Su-35 multirole fighters.

KnAAPO sold 43 units of the Su-27SK to the PLAAF of China between 1991 and 1995. The following year a contract was signed between the two parties to locally assemble 200 units of Su-27s in Shenyang, China.

In 2000, the PLAAF requirement for a multirole tactical fighter resulted in the inking of a contract with KnAAPO for 40 units of Su-30MK, with the first aircraft being delivered in December 2000.

In July the following year, a second contract was signed for the delivery of 38 units of Su-30MK, with all the aircraft to be delivered by 2003.

Malaysia, the first Asian country to engage the Russian Military Industrial Complex since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990's, currently operates 17 RAC MiG-built Mig-29N air superiority combat aircraft and two Mil Mi-171 firefighting helicopters.

Malaysia is also interested in setting up a regional Helicopter Completion Centre that will serve as a specialised facility capable of undertaking refurbishment and avionics upgrades of Russian-built civil and military helicopters of the Mil and Kamov families.

The Royal Malaysian Air Force is presently evaluating offers for a squadron of multirole combat aircraft, about 16 units, for which Sukhoi Su-30 and Boeing's F/A-18F Super Hornet are seen as the leading contenders.

Malaysian defence procurement policy has evolved over the years to elicit the optimum economic benefits through financial and trade off-set programmes in these transactions.

In this respect, KnAAPO has offered the joint development and marketing with Malaysian interests of the Su-80 and the BE-103 amphibious aircraft throughout South East Asia, Africa and South America.

The Su-80 is a rugged short take-off and landing (STOL) multi-purpose twin turboprop aircraft with both cargo and passenger versions using American (GE) engines.

The demand for this aircraft for the next 20 years in the region for which the marketing rights are being negotiated by Malaysian interests is estimated to be 800 aircraft.

In Malaysia both versions of the Su-80 could be used by companies like

Pos Malaysia, Malaysia Airlines (for its rural air service) as well as private companies specialising in tourist air charter operations.

The BE-103 light multi-purpose amphibian is intended for short-route flights in various environments that are inaccessible by other means of transport.

The offer by KnAAPO for the joint production and marketing of the Su-80 and the BE-103 provides Malaysia with a good opportunity to enhance and widen its aerospace industry capabilities.

KnAAPO's joint production offer is structured as part of an equation which should include the Su-35 multirole combat aircraft as the other part of the package.

Code One Magazine, a publication of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics company, in its October 1994 issue said, "Sukhoi's latest and greatest fighter, the stunning Su-35 is viewed as the most potent threat facing Western military air forces today."

"It is a superb combat aircraft, mixing modern technique and technology with a strong dose of Russian mechanical pragmatism."

The single seat version Su-35 were delivered to the Russian Air Force in 1996 and the Su-35UB two seater entered Russian air force service in 2000.

The Su-35 is considered by the Asian Military Review as comparable with the latest generation of designs from the US and Europe such as the F-16, Rafale and Eurofighter.

Its various enhancements and evolution from the Su-27 design give the Su-35 super manoeuvrability.

Apart from KnAAPO, the Irkutsk Aviation Industrial Association or IAPO is another manufacturer of combat aircraft of the Su-27 family.

Both corporations, together with the Sukhoi Bureau, are part of the Aviation Military Industrial Complex Sukhoi.

Currently IAPO is producing the Su-30MKI which was jointly developed for the Indian Air Force by the Indians and Russians.

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