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ACM-PRECISION

ACM WELL-PLACED TO BE LEADING COMPOSITES MANUFACTURER

By: Siti Aishah Mohamad

BUKIT KAYU HITAM, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Asian Composites Manufacturing Sdn Bhd has taken strong measures in its overall management and production processes to ensure the company will truly emerge as a leading composites manufacturing centre where precision is of utmost importance.

Its chairman, Datuk Syed Tamim Syed Mohamed, said such measures included comprehensive training, both in the classroom and on the job for a pioneer group of 14 trainees at the Boeing company and Hexcel Corporation plants, continued improvements in services and products and keeping abreast with technology.

"Research and Development is of paramount importance in maintaining the competitive edge of the company, he said at the opening of the Asian Composite Manufacturing Sdn Bhd (ACM) plant by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Bukit Kayu Hitam industrial estate, about 50km from here.

ACM is a company involved in the production of advanced composite materials for the aviation industry.

The company, set up in 1998, is a joint venture between local companies, Sime Darby Bhd and Naluri Bhd and its American partners, The Boeing Company and Hexcel Corporation.

ACM was set up as part of Malaysia's national aerospace blueprint which was launched at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA) 1997.

Each partner holds a 25 percent equity with an initial investment of RM156 million.

The plant delivered its first batch of composite parts on schedule in June 2001 and in compliance with all the stringent ISO and customers' requirements.

Syed Tamim said that the products were shipped to the Hexcel facilities in Kent in the US for assembly, before final delivery to Boeing.

To-date, ACM has 217 workers with 10 expatriates mainly in the production and quality control department of the factory.

He said that ACM aims for the transfer of technology to be done gradually but comprehensively so that the factory can be run entirely by a Malaysian workforce in two to four years' time.

He also said that as of August 2002, ACM has achieved a total of 750,000 manhours without lost time injury in its operations.

While it was only producing secondary structures during its humble beginnings such as fixed railing edges and firings, opportunities were there to venture into more complicated and complex primary structures and interiors.

A composite technology is not merely confined to the aerospace industry as the setting up of the factory could be further enhanced to stimulate various spin off composites applications through proper in-depth research and development.

This includes applications in the automotive industries and the manufacture of recreational equipment while the potential of other downstream activities are there to be exploited, Syed Tamim said. --

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