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Blueprint for aerospace success

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AIMING HIGH: 2030
goal for Malaysia to capture new markets, upgrade industry, says PM

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak receiving a gift from Airbus Defence and Space chief executive officer Bernhard Gerwert during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition 2015 at Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre yesterday. Pic by Ghazali Kori

HAVING grown the aerospace sector since 1997, the government will be looking to even greater heights.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday a new aerospace blueprint would chart the growth of Malaysia's aerospace industry until 2030.

The aim, he said, was to make Malaysia the No. 1 aerospace nation in Southeast Asia and an integral part of the global market.

Following the success of the first Malaysian Aerospace Industry Blueprint, launched in 1997, the industry has grown to a RM19 billion sector, with investments of

RM4.2 billion. The Malaysia Aerospace Industry Blueprint 2030, Najib said, would lay out key initiatives to enable Malaysia to capture new markets and upgrade levels of industry sophistication.

"The goals which we hope to reach will be revenue exceeding RM32.5 billion and over 32,000 high-income jobs," he said at the launch of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) exhibition 2015.

He said to underline the government's commitment to the vision, the cabinet had recently approved the establishment of the National Aerospace Coordinating Agency, which will come under the purview of the International Trade and Industry Ministry.

"This agency will be tasked with implementing the blueprint, and will become the new secretariat for the Malaysian Aerospace Council."

Najib said the aerospace industry was not the only one that had grown in Malaysia, noting that in 2013, the maritime industry recorded a turnover of RM8.36 billion.

"We have a long history as a maritime nation, a tradition that is recognised by continuing to be a

key sector under Malaysia's Third Industrial Master Plan, and I am confident that we will see further and stronger growth in all aspects of maritime commerce.

"Situated at the heart of one of the most energetic maritime and aerospace markets, with strong connections to the region and an open, business-friendly economy, Malaysia's prospects for growth remain strong."

Najib also touched on the impact LIMA would have on Asean, a focus the biennial show has added in tandem with Malaysia's chairmanship of the regional grouping this year.

"The focus on Asean will strengthen LIMA's foundation as a platform for the maritime and aerospace industries in one of the world's most dynamic regions."

Najib said despite the trend of lower global spending, forecasts indicated a growth in maritime and aviation spending in Asean, both in the defence and commercial sectors, in the coming years.

"Military modernisation programmes continue to drive defence spending in Asean, and acquisitions of ships and aircraft are expected to make up the majority of defence procurement spending until 2020," he said, adding that

forecasts for defence spending in the region would reach US\$44.5 billion (RM164.65 billion) in 2018, from US\$38.5 billion this year.

Present yesterday were former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

After the opening ceremony, Najib toured the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre, where Lima is being held, before heading to Porto Malai, where he officially received the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency's new Bay-class vessel KM *Perwira*, a recent donation from Australia.