

Malaysia aims to soar higher

PM keen on South Korea's aerospace industry achievements

The Star - 26/11/2019 Pg. 2

SACHEON: Malaysia is interested in South Korea's progress and developments in the aerospace industry, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Speaking during his visit to the Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) facility here yesterday, the Prime Minister said South Korea has made great strides in the highly technological field since the last time he visited the country in 2002.

"I have always been interested in fighter planes and indigenous planes. I want to see how they perform and the advancement of your aircraft industry," he told KAI chief executive Ahn Hyun-ho, who received him at the facility earlier.

A qualified pilot and an avid follower of aero technology, the Prime Minister arrived at the aerospace and defence facility by helicopter at about 10.30am local time.

Sacheon is located about 100km from Busan, the host city of the Asean-South Korea Commemorative Summit 2019, which Dr Mahathir is scheduled to attend.

He spent more than two hours at the facility, which included attending a 30-minute meeting with the company's top officials.

He later toured the facility and was briefed on KAI's FA-50 Fighting Eagle light combat aircraft (LCA).

Malaysia is currently mulling its option on LCAs and may formally launch a procurement effort to enable its air force to keep up with advanced technology and capability.

According to defence publication *Jane's Defence Weekly*, the Royal Malaysian Air Force's (RMAF) plans to procure up to 36 LCAs with an option for 26 more to complement its current batch of Hawks, Sukhoi SU-30MKM and FA-18D Hornets



Hi-tech marvel: Dr Mahathir admiring an FA-50 Light Combat craft during his visit to the KAI facility in Sacheon. Looking on is Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (right). — Bernama

fighter jets.

The LCAs are expected to serve several roles in RMAF, including as LCA and lead-in fighter trainer.

Among the other types of LCA under consideration by RMAF are the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Tejas, the Leonardo M-346, the Aero Vodochody L-39NG, the CAC L-15A/B, the CAC/PAC JF-17, the Saab Gripen and the Yakovlev Yak-130.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir said the government wanted Malaysia to be part of the Fourth (IR 4.0) and use modern technology to its advantage.

Speaking at the Asean-South Korea Commemorative Summit, he

said among the most promising industries in Malaysia were information technology and new technologies.

"We may be behind many others, but we intend to catch up.

"We need to educate (Malaysians) from young so that they are more familiar with the new values, new strategy of doing things and new kinds of businesses," he told a full house session moderated by Yoon Sung-woon of Bain and Company.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia continued to welcome foreign investors despite the change in government.

The CEO Dialogue, organised by

the Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was held in conjunction with the two-day summit, which started yesterday with a leaders' welcoming dinner.

Dr Mahathir also visited the Malaysian Pavilion at the Invest Asean Exhibition held in conjunction with the summit yesterday.

Malaysian exhibitors participating at the event included Mida, Matrade, Invest Selangor, Halal Development Corporation, Usaha Strategik Sdn Bhd, We Build Easy Sdn Bhd and Tourism Malaysia Seoul.

It is expected to attract 10,000 visitors. — Bernama