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**Aerospace Engineering in Malaysia**by **Engr. Mohd. Khir bin Muhammad**, FIEEM, P. Eng.

AEROSPACE is a very diverse field, with a multitude of commercial, industrial and military applications. Aerospace is typically referred to as the industry that researches, designs, manufactures, operates and maintains aircrafts and space vehicles, and is interchangeably used with the terms aeronautics or astronautics.

The Malaysian aerospace industry is generally categorised into sub-sectors including light craft assembly, parts and components manufacture, maintenance/repair/overhaul (MRO) activities, as well as design and development.

In recent years, more emphasis has been given to related areas such as communication satellite technology and Un-manned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in order to sustain and advance the technology which is applicable to Malaysia.

Aerospace industry itself houses most complex core technologies which are applicable to other industries and provide critical technologies for the future. Technological spin-offs in aerospace from advanced nations had significantly contributed to the development of commercial products and services in various fields including automotive.

Special technologies invented and developed in the aerospace sector have been subsequently industrialised and found many applications in the automotive sector – racing cars, advanced lightweight composites materials, supercharger engines – to name a few.

Aerospace and automotive are strategic for the growth and development of the nation, and to ensure this, Malaysia must continue to make investments in these industries, seeking for smart partnership as well as the upgrading of related fields.

Technologies acquired through procurement and offsets in these industries must help the nation to gain access to a foreign markets and fully realise our national competitive advantage.

HOW CAN IEM PLAY ITS ROLE?

For a start, perhaps it is time for IEM, as a leading learned professional society in the country with the principal aim of promoting the advancement of all aspects of engineering, science and technology, to provide a common platform to promote interaction and interest among engineers in these fields.

With a combined workforce in the aerospace and automotive industries, and engineering students, IEM should put more efforts into recruiting more members from these fields. IEM should consider setting up a special interest group for aerospace and automotive (or even a Technical Division).

Aerospace and automotive are multi-disciplinary in nature and it is now becoming harder to clearly distinguish between them if they fall under one of the major engineering disciplines. To recruit more members, IEM should be made more attractive to other engineering disciplines and must be seen as relevant to all engineering disciplines.

In this way, IEM's contribution to the aerospace industry will be globally competitive and widely acknowledged, as what has been achieved by the electronics and automotive industries. ■