

The race is on

AFTER a tough selection process, 10 teams have emerged as finalists in the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Siswa Challenge 2013-2014.

The finalists are teams El Nino Alpha 4 and Wired Up from International Islamic University Malaysia, teams Hex-ell and UTMost from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, teams Icarus and Langit Biru UPM from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), team Namtor from Universiti Teknologi Mara, team Phoenix from Universiti Teknologi Petronas, team UMP Phoenix from Universiti Malaysia Pahang and team USM AeroCopter P1 from Universiti Sains Malaysia.

At a recent ceremony graced by Datuk Ab Rahim Md Noor, formerly secretary general of the Higher Education Ministry (which has now been merged with the Education Ministry), the teams were presented with hexacopter kits to start them off on their challenge.

Each kit contained a set of components for a six-rotor aerial vehicle and equipment to add extra functionalities required in the final competition.

Organised by the aerospace companies Dassault Aviation and Composites Technology Research Malaysia Sdn Bhd (CTRM) in part-



Fix it: Sazril Syamir Suliman (third from left), Muhammad Rijaluddin Bahiki (in red tie), Mohamad Khair Shaiful Alam (second from right) and Mohamad Ridzuan Mohd Sharif (right) of team Langit Biru from UPM checking the components of their newly received hexacopter kit.

nership with the Education Ministry and the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (Might), the challenge was opened to all tertiary institutions in the country.

The UAV is an aerial system that requires dedicated software, equipment and systems thus allowing autonomous flying without a pilot on board.

It is an example of high technology, low risk equipment that are being used in a growing number of applications such as recon-

naissance and surveillance over wide areas, ranging from civil to military usage.

The challenge was designed to provide students with a platform to learn more about aerospace technologies via an interesting hands-on project where they have access to input and guidance from commercial companies.

"Their overwhelming response, with 42 registered teams from 13 universities, confirms to us that Malaysian students and the Malaysian academic world as a whole, are ready to be involved in ambitious aerospace projects that we, as an industrial partner, could propose in the country," said Dassault Aviation's representative and Rafale Programme director for Malaysia Daniel Fremont.

The next step of the challenge will see the 10 finalists building their own UAV and undertaking the system integration requirements to give their UAVs the best capabilities, said Fremont.

The deadline is Feb 2014. The teams have eight months to build and test their UAVs before showing off their designs in the final two stages of the competition where they will face a technical evaluation. The winning team will visit France on a one-week study tour.