

Dr M takes some hotels to task

By AHIRUDINATTAN

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday took to task some hotel operators in Langkawi for failing to deliver accommodation booked for the Langkawi International Aerospace and Maritime (Lima '91) show.

He said although bookings for Lima '91 participants were made by the show organisers well ahead, some hotels gave the rooms away after other parties offered higher rates.

"The show organisers reserved enough rooms for the participants, only to find that the rooms were taken up later. When they (the hotel operators) made a promise, they should have kept it," he told reporters on the final day of the five-day show. The Prime Minister later hosted a dinner in conjunction with the

closing of the show.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the operators' attitude of taking for granted promises they had made will erode the trust in them. "When we break a promise, we lose our credibility."

On claims by some hotel operators that the agent appointed by the organisers had failed to pay for the rooms, he said Trans Malaysia Tours & Agency, the agent, had briefed him on the matter.

"The agent said it called the hotels for a meeting to determine the mode of payment but some did not turn up. But I think if the agent is required to make the full payment 'upon booking the rooms, that is no longer called making a booking," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he regrets the attitude of these

hoteliers because the Government and the organisers had booked enough rooms for the Lima '91 participants. "I hope this doesn't happen again."

The Prime Minister's concern over the accommodation hitch summarises the main problem cited by Lima '91 participants at a news conference held at the end of the five-day show.

Representatives from the UK, France, Italy and Australia told the conference that heartaches over insufficient hotel rooms for their exhibitors and participants was one hitch which the organisers could not solve.

"Otherwise, any problem facing us was resolved by the organisers within minutes," Italian delegation spokesman Felice Musso said.

On the move to make Langka-

wi the heart of Malaysia's aerospace industry, the Prime Minister said Airod, the country's aircraft repairs and overhaul firm, and Cessna, the US commuter aircraft manufacturer, have entered into a joint venture to set up a pilot training academy on the island.

The academy is scheduled to open next year. The flying school in Malacca, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added, does not have the capacity to meet the increasing demand for pilot training.

He said the academy in Langkawi will train both local pilots and pilots from other countries.

Earlier, the Prime Minister said the Government will be "very selective" in approving aerospace industries in Langkawi.