

# Big potential for air pilot schools

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LANGKAWI, Sat. — Malaysia is set to be the world's most popular pilot training centre if it maintains its comparative advantage of having lower operational costs, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

To achieve that target, private pilot training centres must ensure existing costs are maintained. Increasing the costs would affect the potential and future of such centres, he added.

The Prime Minister emphasised that the comparative advantage should be protected. He said the success of such centres could contribute towards the nation's economic growth and also promote Langkawi as a

major international tourist destination.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the opening of the Mofaz Air Pilot Training School at the Langkawi International Airport here today. He then sprinkled *tepung tawar* on one of the five Mofaz Air's Cessna planes to launch the school.

He thanked Mofaz Air for responding to the Government's call to set up aviation industries on the island.

He hoped more aviation-related private firms would respond to the Government's call and start setting up ventures in Langkawi.

Dr Mahathir said the pilot

training centre was vital because of the rapid growth in the aviation industry in Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Pacific rim.

He said the industry would need more personnel, especially pilots, because the industry was expected to expand.

Dr Mahathir said this school would train local pilots while it was also opened to overseas recruitment.

Before the Mofaz training school was set up, Malaysia had one flying school in Malacca and several flying clubs.

"We had to send our trainees overseas for commercial pilot training programmes. The country had to spend a

high cost for the purpose," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Langkawi was suitable for the pilot training school because there were adequate facilities at the Langkawi International airport.

Earlier, Mofaz Air president Haji Mohamed Fauzy Abdul Hamid said a complex would be built on a 12-hectare site near the airport to run training programmes for trainee pilots.

The complex would have various facilities including a hangar and chalets.

Haji Mohamed Fauzy said the course for the private pilot licence would begin in April. The first intake would be 100 trainees.