

PM: Malaysia hopes to become major player

Move to make aircraft

in aviation industry

aircraft parts

**From
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in Paris**

MALAYSIA hopes to become a world player in the aviation industry by supplying parts and components to aircraft manufacturers, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said Malaysia was anxious to prove to the world that it could manufacture these items up to the required standards of aircraft builders.

"Not only will they be of the required standards, but will also be competitively priced," he told journalists at a reception on Thursday night.

Dr Mahathir was the guest of honour at the reception, organised by Le Proton LIMA Sdn Bhd, the organisers of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) exhibitions.

The third Lima is scheduled for December at the Mahsuri exhibition centre in Langkawi. Some 400 aircraft and aviation-related manufacturers and those providing related services have indicated their desire to take part in the show.

Dr Mahathir said he believed aircraft manufacturers would show a greater reliance on the use of composite material in aircraft-making.

"Composites will be a material for the future," he said, adding that Malaysia was making concrete preparations for proper composite manufacturing.

He said a "composite city" was being designed around the Batu Berendam airport in Malacca. Land for this purpose had been acquired, he said, adding that the room for expansion was tremendous.

Asked why the area was chosen, Dr Mahathir said the construction of highways to Malacca had made travelling to the State faster and easier, meaning that fewer people were flying to Malacca.

He said therefore it was appropriate that the airport and its surrounding area be utilised for other purposes such as training and other development aspects of the aviation industry.

Asked how soon Malaysia could become a world player in the sector, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, we want to go into the aerospace industry. We want a share in it. We started on a small scale, by repairing and refurbishing aircraft.

"We have identified composites as an important element in the future development of the industry. With the air show in Langkawi, we will get to know more people who may want to farm out their component-making jobs.

"With the air show, we can also meet people in the industry who may need new sources for their parts. Aircraft-making is not concentrated at one particular location ... there is a lot of international sourcing of parts and components now."

Asked whether Malaysia would be designing its own aircraft in the future, the Prime Minister said: "Well, we won't be designing our own 747s ... but maybe we'll look into the designing of a small trainer (aircraft).

"We intend to show the aviation world that we can maintain the skills and standards demanded by the industry. We may have to leap-frog other people, otherwise we will never catch up."

Asked to indicate where the new markets for aircraft were, Dr Mahathir said there appeared to be much interest in business aircraft. "Businessmen want their own aircraft to get to Indochina, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan and Indonesia where there are hundreds of islands.

"We will be more than happy to supply parts and components to them. It's much faster and easier for

PLEASE TURN TO
PAGE 2, COL 7

Big boost for organisers

FROM PAGE ONE

businessmen, for example, to travel in their own aircraft or charter them.

"There are far too many people building regional jets, so we would rather go into parts and components manufacturing."

Dr Mahathir gave the Lima organisers a boost by attending the reception. Aircraft manufacturers, executives in the aviation-related sectors and ambassadors were also present at the reception, aimed at promoting Lima.

Dr Mahathir said Lima had received international endorsements from aircraft makers and aviation-related sectors.

"What started as an air show for small aircraft has

now grown into an exhibition of considerable importance."

Lima also received a boost when Aviation Week Group Show News, a New York-based group, indicated that it would help promote Lima. Billing itself as a group which offers numerous aviation-related publications, Aviation Week boasted that its publications "are where the aerospace world turns first".

It offers print and electronic products for every professional in the global aviation and aerospace sector. Its publications include *Business Aviation*, *World Aviation Directory*, *Catalogue Guide*, *Overhaul and Maintenance*, *Buyers Guide* and are said to be available in 140 countries.