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Mahathir - LIMA '97

ECONOMIC CRISIS WILL NOT JEOPARDISE LIMA '97

LANGKAWI, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is confident that the economic and financial crisis in the region will not undermine the attraction of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA '97) here.

He said many felt that the situation was temporary in nature and would not affect demand for maritime and aerospace products in the long run.

"It doesn't mean that what is exhibited today will be sold today," he told reporters after a briefing and tour of the exhibition sites at Padang Matsirat and Tanjung Malai, here.

The Prime Minister said the exhibitors might get orders after the situation had calmed down.

Dr Mahathir said that like in the previous exhibitions, most of the visitors were those who decided on the choice of aircraft and boats as LIMA was sort of a trade exhibition.

LIMA '97 to be held from Dec 2 to 7 will see 903 companies from 40 countries exhibiting their products as compared to 642 companies from 35 countries in LIMA '95.

The increase reflected the confidence exhibitors had in LIMA, he said.

Dr Mahathir was also satisfied with preparations made for the exhibition which this time would have bigger maritime show with participation of battleships and luxury boats.

Apart from promoting Langkawi as a tourist destination, the biennial exhibition provide many indirect benefits to the country, he said.

Dr Mahathir did not dismiss the possibility that the exhibition hall might be expanded in future if it received more visitors this year.

He cited as example the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre (MIEC) which had been expanded three times to 22,000 sq metres to meet the increasing number of exhibitors and visitors.

In LIMA '95, the exhibition drew 14,000 trade visitors and 60,000 general visitors compared to 10,000 and 40,000 respectively in LIMA '93.

Defence Ministry Secretary General Datuk Azizan Husain in his briefing to Dr Mahathir said the government had allocated RM4.5 million for the LIMA '97 compared to RM5.2 million in LIMA '95.

The government's allocation were for providing basic and infrastructural facilities and other services.

A total of 154 state guests from 52 countries have been invited for the six-day exhibition, including 37 defence ministers, 13 transport ministers, 22 defence forces chiefs, 20 navy chiefs, 30 air force chiefs and seven army chiefs.

As added attractions, the Defence Ministry had made a request to the U.S. Secretary of Defence for a Stealth Bomber and Galaxie Transport to be included in the LIMA '97.

Azizan said this could only be confirmed at the last minute for operational reasons.

He said four submarines from Russia, France, Turkey and Pakistan would also be taking part. --BERNAMA

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