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Exhibitors glad to have helped in promoting 'flying culture'

ASIA'S first fly-in, the Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In convention and exhibition came to a close yesterday with most exhibitors satisfied at being able to help generate interest in aviation among enthusiasts, especially the young.

Among others, they said the fly-in concept was a great idea to promote sports aviation among the youth to develop the "flying culture" envisioned by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

John Ford, of the Australian Ultralight Federation, said the concerted effort by both the Government and the private sector in realising the fly-in concept was commendable.

"Your Prime Minister is very visionary. I like the idea of exposing youth to the culture of aviation through this fly-in event and I believe with the support of the Government and private sector, the objective will be met," he said.

Ford, 67, who is known as the "grand-daddy" of ultralights in Tasmania, said though there were some problems with the organisation of the event, it was excusable since this was the inaugural one.

"I can understand the restrictions of such shows, but there will be improvements. The important thing is the objective of educating schoolchildren on aviation has been met," he said.

Luigi Guarino, managing director of Simply Fly (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, an ultralight distributor, also commended the concept

"It is a good effort to encourage youth to take up flying. In the long run, Malaysia will benefit from an aviation-sound community," he said.

If there was one booth which had the most number of visitors, it must have been the Royal Malaysian Air Force, which also conducted aptitude tests for students.

Mej Nazir Abdul Rahman of the RMAF headquarters (Training) said the air aptitude test received overwhelming response from students.

"We had more than 300 students taking the test over the past week and about one-third passed," he said, adding that this was also a good avenue for the students to test their ability.

Meanwhile, Wayne King, an Australian participant, said it was important for those involved in the aviation industry to follow up on the event to ensure that it was held on a grander scale next year.

He also said the event itself was not enough to generate interest among youth, but added that they should be exposed to aviation related subjects beginning from the secondary school level.

Captain T.S. Tay of the Batu Pahat microlight park said there were bound to be problems in inaugural events of this nature but the organiser should have anticipated the need for "tie-downs" for microlights and other light airplanes.

"The organisers were not prepared for any eventuality like the freak storm which destroyed three of my club's microlights," he said.

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