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Mahathir-submarines

M'SIA NOT BUYING SUBMARINES AS YET, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

LANGKAWI, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- Malaysia does not plan to buy submarines as yet as she has no need for such vessels for now, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

But he did not discount the possibility of the country acquiring submarines in future.

The prime minister said this when reporters approached him after inspecting submarines on display at the 1997 Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition here.

Responding to a question from a Russian reporter, he said Malaysia may appraise Russian-made submarines if and when she decides to start a fleet.

During the visit, Dr Mahathir had a first-hand look at a Russian Kiloclass submarine taking part in the Lima '97 at the Tanjung Malai jetty here.

It is one of four submarines on display at the maritime segment of the show besides those from France, Pakistan and Turkey.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir officiated at a ceremony to bless a luxury catamaran the Superstar Express Langkawi and announced the Prime Minister's round-the-world by sea challenge trophy.

The Superstar Express Langkawi is attempting to set a new world circumnavigation record of 48 days next year.

The existing record of 83 days was set by a United States navy submarine, the "USS Triton" in 1960.

In announcing the Prime Minister's challenge trophy, Dr Mahathir said the attempt by Star Cruises, owner of the luxury catamaran, would make Malaysians proud while promoting Langkawi as a key tourist destination.

The attempt by the Superstar Express Langkawi is yet another world record-breaking endeavour by Malaysians after conquering Mount Everest last August.

The luxury catamaran is scheduled to start the attempt from Port Klang in June next year calling at 10 ports and covering 36,000 nautical miles within 48 days, said Star Cruises chairman Datuk K T Lim.

The 82-metre vessel will call at Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Honolulu, San Francisco, Panama, New York, London, Suez and Bombay.

Lim said during the voyage, the US\$40-million catamaran would also try to set records for the fastest crossing of the South China Sea, the East China Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea.

"We have dedicated the trophy in honour of all Prime Ministers of Malaysia - past, present and future. We will do our best to show the world that Malaysia Boleh (can do it) ," he said.

The 5,419-tonne Australian-built vessel, capable of speed up to 42 knots per hour, can carry 175 cars and 900 passengers.

Upon its launching by Dr Mahathir today, the Superstar Express Langkawi inaugurated its service between Butterworth, Langkawi and Phuket.

It takes two hours to cover the 150km-journey from Butterworth to Langkawi.

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