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Next air event to be on bigger scale

7" by Ashraf Abdullah; Sufi Yusoff; Sharanjit Singh; Marhalim Abas LE Proton Lima Sdn Bhd, the organiser of the first fly-in held here over the last five days, have promised a better, bigger and more interesting event when it is next held.

Admitting the company faced some teething problems in holding the event for the first time this year, Le Proton chairman Datuk Radzi Manan said the next fly-in would be held on a bigger scale.

"The next fly-in will be held at a more suitable time, probably during the school holidays in April, to enable more people to attend the show.

"We will also invite more participants and make it an event everyone will look forward to," he said, adding the event would probably be held on a biennial basis beginning 1999.

The Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In, which was officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday and ended yesterday, attracted participants from eight countries, including Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Singapore, Italy and Japan.

The participants flew to the Langkawi International Airport in Padang Matsirat in light and experimental aircraft, gliders and microlights of different makes and sizes.

A total of 62 aircraft took part in the event. These included the Eagle XTS, Pilatus PC6, SME MD3-160, Blanik L13 (Glider), Storch L4 (Ultralight), Piper Warrior and Cessna 172.

Also on display were motorised paragliders, aerochutes and a variety of radio-controlled planes and helicopters.

Radzi said more participants would have taken part in the event but the number was reduced due to unavoidable circumstances like the haze. He said the haze caused many participants to withdraw from the fly-in at the last minute.

On complaints from visitors and journalists covering the event that they were prevented from going to the airport's tarmac area where most of the aircraft were on static display, Radzi said:

"We realise many faced the problem...even I was not allowed in by the airport authorities without an official pass.

"However, we hope to overcome such problems when the next show is held," he said, adding that 12,000 people, 4,000 of whom were students, visited the show this year.

Radzi said the fly-in also provided invaluable experience to the airport air traffic controllers.

Asked to comment on suggestions by some participants that the fly-in be held in different parts of the country instead of Langkawi alone, Radzi said the organisers would gather feedback from all participants before deciding on the next move.

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