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## PM urges Malaysians to acquire flying culture

LANGKAWI, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Malaysians to acquire and develop the flying culture by venturing beyond mere flying and to indulge in understanding aircraft mechanics.

"We want to stimulate interest in flying, especially among the young, but beyond that we want to stimulate interest in construction, understanding how aircraft are designed, built and how they fly in the air and how to control the aircraft.

"We Malaysians in particular are way behind many countries," he said when speaking at the launching of the Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In convention and exhibition near the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre in Padang Matsirat today.

Dr Mahathir said the Government hoped the event, the first in Asia and modelled after the Oshkosh Fly-In in Wisconsin, the United States, would generate interest among the young to start flying and to stimulate their interest in aircraft construction and design.

He said the event was also a chance for more Malaysians to get to know flying at a very low cost.

"We can start with light aircraft before we graduate to other aircraft and later perhaps we can fly the 747. But everything has to progress step by step.

"When we start with light aircraft, flying becomes much easier later on, but there is no guarantee that there will be no accidents unless you are really careful," he said.

Dr Mahathir likened the experimental aircraft on display at the event to "small flying contraptions" and "pieces of aluminium tied together" that "fly around rather happily".

"These experimental aircraft do not conform to the standards required by the Department of Civil Aviation for normal aircraft.

"Of course there is a little danger but everything is dangerous in this world. In fact, in Malaysia, more people get killed on the highway than in aircraft accidents," he said, adding in jest that as a doctor, he could say that more people died in bed than anywhere else.

"Flying is dangerous if you do not pay attention to what you are doing and it is unforgiving in the sense that if you miss out certain things you may end up in an uncomfortable position.

"I would advise people interested in flying to understand the culture," he said, adding it was not the same culture as professed by Malaysian lorry drivers who could not care less if they were involved in accidents as they were in a vehicle which was bigger than the rest, only others would get hurt.

However, the Prime Minister said if one was unwilling to try and experiment, one would never make any progress.

Dr Mahathir also related his experience flying inverted in an F-5E fighter jet.

"The sensation I felt was that they moved Penang above me. But the pilot was good and he knew how to fly the aircraft well. So I survived."

However, Dr Mahathir said only experts should try stunts like this.

"If no proper attention is paid, one could very quickly reach the ground.

"You can end up in many pieces ... including your aircraft," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said that the event would showcase the Eagle 150

aircraft which was built by a Malaysian company, Composite Technologies Research Malaysia.

"The parts are now produced in Malaysia, but at the moment assembly is being done in Australia," he said, adding that another company Phileo Allied was already producing sports aircraft for export to the United States.

He said while all these involved only light aircraft, the industry in Malaysia would move step by step to eventually go for manufacturing as well as producing components for conventional commercial aircraft.

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