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PM's advice to those keen on flying an aircraft

MALAYSIANS who are interested in flying an aircraft should understand the culture of flying, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

This involves careful building, maintaining and flying the aircraft properly.

Launching the five-day Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In convention and exhibition in Langkawi, Dr Mahathir said flying an aircraft is not the same as driving lorries in Malaysia.

"Flying is not like that ... if you want to fly, you must develop a special culture which focuses on being very meticulous ... building the aircraft, maintaining and flying it properly," he added.

In this case, Dr Mahathir said the launch of Langkawi Oshkosh Fly-In convention and exhibition is timely as it will not only stimulate young Malaysians in the activity but also beyond.

"This will stimulate interest in the construction area and the understanding of how aircraft are built, designed, flown and control when they are in the air.

"Malaysians have to learn ... we are way behind other countries in terms of usage of aircraft and parts. We also want to stimulate the design and construction of aircraft," he said, adding Malaysia, which has already produced light aircraft and components, will eventually produce commercial aircraft.

Dr Mahathir also recalled the time when Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In was first mooted, earlier than the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (Lima) in 1991.

"At that time, we intended to organise the Oshkosh East. However, we received overwhelming response from giant aviation companies, including defence industries, which warrants us to expand the event into a bigger exhibition.

"The response towards Lima was very good in the sense that every year we have to expand the exhibition area and hall.

"The Government planned it small, but eventually it became a mega project. It is not by design, but anything that we start has a tendency to grow very quickly ... that is the price," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said Malaysians should be willing to try and experiment or else they will never make any progress.

"I am glad we have Oshkosh East Fly In that will allow many Malaysians to know about flying at a very low cost.

"You can begin with lighter aircraft before graduating to heavier ones and then towards the Jumbos," he added.

Later when speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir said the Government is willing to provide financial aid for certain people to be involved in flying light and microlight aircraft.

"For some people, we can give financial assistance ... not all, as those who can afford will have to finance themselves," he said, adding the Government will find whatever sources it can get to assist Malaysians to involve in the industry.

After the launching ceremony, Dr Mahathir spent about two hours looking at some of the aircraft display at the exhibition centre as well as demonstration of the light aircraft.

More than 60 aircraft were displayed at the exhibition, which include

the Malaysian-made Eagle aircraft, SME Aerospace training aircraft and "ERM" (Experimental Rakan Muda) aircraft developed under the Rakan Muda air recreation development programme.

Dr Mahathir also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MYHH Hobby Centre of Kedah and OK Model Co Ltd of Osaka, Japan.

Under the MOU, MYHH plans to set up a factory to design and build remote control aeromodel aircraft in Kedah, with the assistance from OK Model which will design the engine of the aircraft.

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