

08/12/1997

RMAF show marks close of memorable six days

THE fourth Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition, described as a success by its creator, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, came to a close today with a final aerial display by the Royal Malaysian Air Force's aerobatic teams.

Before the exhibition ended, the RMAF's FA/18Ds, MiG-29s and Hawks joined the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows, the Benson and Hedges Golden Dreams Aerobatic team, an F-16 and CSH-2 Rooivalk attack helicopter for the final display watched by thousands of people in and outside the exhibition area.

The six-day exhibition was opened to the public on the last two days. It saw a total of 11 memorandums of understanding signed and seven agreements concluded.

Dr Mahathir held a closing Press conference at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre where the exhibition for the aerospace segment was held.

Also present at the Press Conference were Defence Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Le Proton Lima executive chairman, Datuk Radzi Manan.

In detailing Lima '97's success, Dr Mahathir said the aerospace segment was well received but the most outstanding success was at the maritime segment, put together by Huswah Exhibition Sdn Bhd.

The Prime Minister was here throughout the week visiting booths at both segments. The maritime segment was held at the newly-opened Star Cruise Jetty at Tanjung Malai.

Dr Mahathir had also taken part in a sailing competition - the Malaysia Challenge - yesterday, organised for the first time to coincide with Lima '97.

In the celebrity competition, Dr Mahathir came out second, beaten only by Huswah's chief, Tan Sri Abdul Wahab Nawī.

Among the dignitaries who visited the exhibition were the Sultan of Brunei, Ghanaian president Jerry Rawlings, South African Defence Minister Joe Modise and South Africa's Public Enterprises Minister S.M.Sigcau. Several Rulers and four chiefs of defence forces also visited the exhibition.

Asked about Lima '97, Dr Mahathir said: "I feel good about it. What we need to do is to improve on our performance for the next one, whether it is at the aerospace or maritime sections."

Asked whether Lima '99 would be held elsewhere, Dr Mahathir said: "No. Lima is for Langkawi, not anywhere else."

On the memorandums of understanding signed at Lima '97, he said it mostly concerned joint ventures and transfer of technology involving Malaysian companies.

Asked whether Lima '97 was more encouraging than the previous Lima, Dr Mahathir said the number of participants was quite good and there were very substantial projects for co-operation between the local and foreign companies.

On his expectation for the next Lima, the Prime Minister said he expected it to be bigger with a greater number of participants.

"In fact, there has been a request to lengthen the time although we have already extended this year's Lima by one day.

"I doubt we can extend the time any more. But, we will see what we can do."

Dr Mahathir said some of companies which participated in this year's

Lima had given their verbal confirmation to return for Lima '99.

"Sixty per cent of the companies have given their verbal confirmation and some of the companies want Lima to be bigger in 1999," he added.

On the future of the aerospace industry, Dr Mahathir said the future was very bright.

"A lot of companies which are keen to work with us. We are already producing two aircraft. The third one is Lancair, which we will be producing soon.

"If you look at Lima '91, when we first started, we had no aircraft or aerospace industry.

"Today, we are not only producing aircraft but also a lot of components. I think the air show has helped the progress of the aerospace industry in Malaysia."

About 21,000 trade visitors and 87,000 public visitors attended this year's Lima.

Some 80 aircraft participated in the static display while 16 took part in the aerial display in the aerospace exhibition.

The maritime division saw participation by 36 warships, four submarines, six pleasure boats and 10 fast boats.

(END)