

03/12/1997

## Significant advances in aircraft manufacturing

SINCE the first Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) exhibition in 1991, the manufacturing of aircraft and components has advanced considerably, especially in the South-East Asian region.

"Many countries in the South-East Asian region are now producing small aircraft and components for big commercial aircraft. Offset programmes have contributed much towards this development," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

In the aerospace industry, the anticipated demand for aircraft by Asia-Pacific countries is estimated at one-quarter of the 15,000 aircraft requirements of the world, or US\$400 billion (US\$1 = RM3.61) in value, by 2014.

"Needless to say, this creates tremendous opportunities for the major aircraft manufacturers. It is therefore not surprising that of late aircraft manufacturers have been concentrating their marketing efforts in this part of the world," he added.

The Prime Minister, who was behind the idea of Lima, traced the development of the aerospace and maritime sectors in the region when opening the fourth Lima exhibition in Langkawi yesterday.

He has officiated all past Lima events and witnessed its growth from a modest start to one of the major aviation/maritime events in the international exhibition calendar.

Some 900 companies from 40 countries are participating in Lima '97, which ends on Sunday.

Dr Mahathir said Lima has made considerable progress in quality and size and gained international recognition as an important biennial event in the aerospace industry.

For this year's event, the exhibition hall is three times bigger than that used for Lima '93. The Langkawi airport runway has also been extended to take the biggest aircraft.

In addition, the maritime section has a deepwater anchorage and jetty and the biggest covered exhibition space.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is strategically located and its infrastructural facilities are well developed for it to become the gateway to the region.

Maintaining that Lima is not a defence exhibition, Dr Mahathir, however, said the maritime and aerospace industries cannot be separated from air and naval defence.

"There is no arms race in the region, but the fact remains that old equipment needs to be replaced with modern ones and capacity enhanced as the areas of defence responsibility widen.

"There will therefore be a great deal of interest on the part of governments in the region for replacements for their outdated fleets and aerial defence equipment," he said.

Acknowledging the presence of several defence ministers and military personnel from countries in the region, the Prime Minister said these government officials are not only interested to buy aircraft and ships, but will want to acquire some manufacturing capability.

"I am sure all exhibitors know this, but those with the most innovative ideas and willingness to transfer technology will find a lot of advantage.

"Obviously, some will win while many will lose. But, that is the way it is. There is no way for everyone to win. There will always be another day

and another opportunity," he said.  
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