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Dr M gives a big thumbs-up to this year's most successful event

GIVING a big thumbs-up to Lima'99, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad described the 1999 edition as the biggest and most successful, particularly on the way it has progressed tremendously.

The Prime Minister, giving his assessment of the fifth biennial exhibition, said he was especially happy with the way it had raised the consciousness of Malaysians on aerospace and maritime activities.

Despite the progress and the headway made, he acknowledged that Malaysia still could not build large aircraft though it could now play a big role in the design and engineering of various sizes of aircraft.

"I am in awe of this achievement," he told a Press conference after a tour of the aerospace exhibits. "It has been worthwhile. I didn't think the progress could be this fast ... faster than my expectations."

Dr Mahathir said there was a great deal of participation from Malaysian youths, which arose from Lima, especially in buying and building experimental aircraft.

He also expressed satisfaction at the way all the Lima events had been carried out.

While the Government did not make any purchases to beef up its defence arsenal, it is considering and inspecting various equipment.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's defence budget would not be lowered despite his earlier call for a refined regional security concept.

"We have to keep up with the skills, especially in peacekeeping," he said.

Dr Mahathir agreed that there would be more co-operation with Russia, Lima 99's biggest participant.

"As good partners," he said, "we should look more on how they can contribute knowledge and we can work with them and market the products."

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