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Flying start for show, official opening today

LANGKAWI, Tues. - The Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition (Lima '99) got off to a smooth start today although publicity for this century's last show was overshadowed by the general election.

Lima '99 was not only a setting to celebrate Malaysia's place in the international aviation scene, but also the Barisan Nasional win in the election yesterday.

Especially so for aerospace component organisers, Le Proton Lima Sdn Bhd executive chairman Datuk Mohd Radzi Manan who won the Tualang Sekah State seat in Perak.

Mohd Radzi, who has been the man behind the previous Lima exhibitions told the New Straits Times the first day response from trade visitors at the Lima '99 exhibition had been encouraging.

"From what I have seen, Lima '99 aerospace segment has the trappings of a good air show."

He said aviation companies have come out "aggressively", despite the postponement of the opening ceremony by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to tomorrow due to the general election.

Mohd Radzi said Le Proton had upgraded its services for this year's show.

"What we have done this year was to upgrade our service to international standards."

However, he said there was a need for the facilities in Langkawi to be upgraded with more hospitality chalets to accommodate future Lima exhibitions.

"If we can have the facilities, we will be able to have a five-star air show."

Mohd Radzi said he expected more memoranda of understanding to be signed at this year's Lima compared to previous years.

More than 650 companies from 40 countries including giants Airbus Industrie, Bombardier Aerospace, Boeing and Malaysia Airlines are participating in the exhibition from today to Dec 5.

With over 90 exhibition stalls at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre and more than 110 aircraft in static display and aerial demonstrations, the show promises to be an unforgettable affair.

The opening day attracted more than 2,000 trade visitors. Up until closing hour, trade delegates and sailors were conversing and making contacts.

Guests at the maritime show included delegates from local and foreign defence ministries and high-ranking naval officers.

A brass band from the Royal Netherlands Air Force livened up the atmosphere by performing around the exhibition halls.

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