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Mahathir-Lima

INDUSTRIES SHOULD BE AGGRESSIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS

LANGKAWI, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the aerospace and maritime industries should aggressively embark upon "smart partnerships" with international companies to boost its development in the country.

The prime minister said: "The aerospace and maritime industries are technology-intensive industries with high value-added and are undoubtedly a catalyst for the development of new technologies and for industrial growth".

"It is expected that foreign industries will strive to develop and achieve meaningful and sincere smart partnerships in every sense of the word, with our local growing aerospace and maritime industries," he said when opening the Lima '99 maritime and aerospace exhibition, here.

In this way, he said, they not only could secure stronger and longer lasting business partnerships and access to the burgeoning market in the region, but could also take advantage of Malaysia's competitive rates, skills as well as disciplined work force.

Language was also not a problem as Malaysians were generally very at home with the English language, said Dr Mahathir in his first international function after the recently-concluded general election.

About 1,000 local and international companies are participating in the six-day Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) exposition. The maritime segment is organised by HW LIMA while the aerospace sector is being managed by LIMA Le Proton.

"I would also like to note here, that some of our local companies have started to progress into designing and manufacturing their own products. Therefore, our local efforts must be integrated further with some international interest and participation through "smart partnerships", so as to create a "win win" situation for those involved," he said.

He said it was Malaysia's hope that it would not be long before more Malaysian companies were able to compete and win international contracts in both aerospace and maritime sectors.

"I believe the Asia Pacific region as a whole, still presents abundant business opportunities in the field of aerospace and maritime for everyone," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian aerospace companies were also venturing into other hi-tech areas such as systems integration and simulator development.

Malaysia today moved a big step forward in its ability to participate meaningfully in the aerospace and maritime industries with established OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) abroad.

Just like the aerospace industry, Dr Mahathir said, "the importance of the country's maritime industry is also duly recognised by the Malaysian government".

He said, "with the Asia Pacific region emerging from the financial crisis and economic slowdown, the demand for sea transportation is expected to register a high growth. Given the considerable opportunities for further growth of the maritime industry, steps have and will be taken to augment its capacity and operations".

An area of growth to note in the maritime industry, the prime minister said, was the development of the leisure craft industry.

He said, it was being actively promoted by the government as more Malaysians become affluent and acquire a taste for "yachting lifestyle".

"The increasing number of marinas and seaside resorts being built speaks for itself. To complement this new lifestyle is the development of lake resorts.

"It is obvious that this development will result subsequently, in higher demand for leisure craft and boating facilities, thereby creating many more spin-offs for industrial growth in the country. Lake-hopping using amphibious aircraft is a tourist product which we are keen to pursue. The beauty of Malaysia's lakes are yet to be discovered," he said.

"Another pertinent development in the country's maritime industry is the number and capacity of our local shipbuilding and repair yards which have increased many folds over the years," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the current acquisition of frigates and the launching of the Royal Malaysian Navy's patrol vessels project undertaken by NSD-Naval Dockyard together with the German Naval Group are government efforts to further stimulate shipbuilding and ship repair activities, while enhancing indigenous technical know-how through various means of transfer of foreign technology.

"Already we are able to build high-speed ferry boats for export all over the world. In this hi-tech area, it is very much desired that the maritime industry embarks upon a more aggressive role in such technologically high end activities as warship design and development," he said.

"This would eventually stimulate the development of local capabilities in the field of naval architecture, marine engineering, marine communication and others," he said.

Dr Mahathir said, "in the global market place, only the strong survives. To succeed, we need to find our own niches. We need to build upon our strengths...we should think of strategic partnerships or even mergers in order to be more competitive".

One significant feature which is new in the series of Lima exhibition is the introduction of the Malaysian pavilion in Lima '99, where leading Malaysian aerospace and maritime companies will showcase some of their products and services.

A number of contracts, purchase orders and MoUs are expected to be signed during this Lima show for both the aerospace and maritime industries, between the foreign and local companies including agreements between SME Aerospace and British Aerospace and between SME Aerospace and Alenia Aerospazio of Italy.

"I am proud to note that our local aerospace industry has begun negotiating with leading aerospace companies worldwide to form strategic alliances to embark in the manufacture of aircraft parts and components under licence and sub-contract," Dr Mahathir added.

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