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LIMA

LANGKAWI INTERNATIONAL MARITIME AND AEROSPACE SHOW BEGINS TOMORROW

LANGKAWI, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- As Malaysia focuses on the General Election preparations are going on briskly here for the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Show which begins tomorrow.

The show which will be on from tomorrow till Dec 5 is divided into two segments -- the air show and naval display. The air show will be at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre (MIEC) while the naval display in the seas off Tanjung Malai.

A Bernama check at the MIEC showed preparations were going on at top gear while test flights were also in progress including that involving a Russian-built SU-30KI with a Malaysian at the controls for the first time.

A statement from the air show organiser Le Proton LIMA Sdn Bhd said aircraft from Russia, Australia and the United States such as F-15, F-16, P-3C Orion, King Air Beech, MiG-29, IL-103, Su-25 and Mi-8AMTSh were already here.

Malaysian aircraft already at the air show site include the Zodiac, MD3, MiG 29, F-18A Hornet and Beechcraft B 200T.

The aerobatic and solo flight demonstration groups taking part in LIMA are the Wingwalking Aerial Display Team from South Africa, the RAAF Roulette of Australia, Red Arrows of the United Kingdom, the Russian Knights and a team from the Gromov Flight Institute of Russia.

The Gromov team with their Tanker IL-78, SU-30 and SU-30KM aircraft arrived here yesterday while the Red Arrows with their BAe MK Hawk arrived this afternoon.

The booming sound of the aircraft taking off and landing filled the air over this legendary resort island as thousands of people including tourists watched in wonder.

The number of companies taking part in LIMA '99 had increased to 1,000 and the show remains as one of the best in this region.

Among the renowned companies are British Aerospace, Marconi, Dassault and Boeing.

The latest Russian aircraft built by the KNAAPO Company -- Sukhoi or SU-0KI-- are also here and this is the first time they are being seen outside Russia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad visited the KNAAPO plant in Russia in August.

Local companies are not left out particularly the light airplane makers "Aerotiga" and "Eagle".

As at previous shows, the display by the British Red Arrows and Russian Knights are expected to take centre stage.

As for the naval show, 35 warships have anchored off Tanjung Malai while four from Thailand have yet to arrive, according to the secretary of the Maritime Organising Committee Lt Commander Jemali Jabon of the Royal Malaysian Navy.

The Siroco of France was still on its way while the USS Vincennes of the United States which is already here is expected to be a top attraction.

The 179-metre long ship with a crew of 500 saw action in the Persian Gulf War of 1990.

A total of 285 companies are taking part in the maritime show.

To make LIMA '99 even merrier and exciting, 220 cultural and artistic events will make up the Langkawi Carnival in several locations on this tourist paradise.

LIMA '99 will be officially declared open on Wednesday.

-- BERNAMA

Team AAM