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LIMA-Russia

RUSSIA'S LATEST SUKHOI FIGHTER STEALS THE LIMELIGHT AT LIMA SHOW

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LANGKAWI, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- The still quietness of Langkawi today was broken with the deafening roar of Russian jets piercing through the skies led by its latest aircraft, the Sukhoi-30KI air superiority fighter which flew over the island, and the region, for the first time outside Russia.

The Russian participation is the largest at the show with some 30 companies from Russia and the former Soviet republics.

Demonstrating the growing interest of Russian combat aircraft manufacturers in the Asia Pacific region, seven Russian aviation-related enterprises took part in the show. Among the nine Russian aircraft which took part in the displays were four aircraft designed by Sukhoi and three by MiG Military Production Complex.

The Su-30, part of the family of Su-27 "Flanker" series of fighter aircraft, was designed for the Soviet Air Force but was only recently produced.

"This is the first time this type of aircraft is being shown outside of Russia," said Vladimir Viktorov, KNAAPO's deputy director-general on export.

He said this air superiority fighter is in a class of its own because it could not be compared with the American F-16 Falcon or the F-18 Hornet aircraft.

The closest aircraft made by the US that could be compared with it would be the F-15 Eagle which apart from the the US is only used by the Saudi, Israeli and Japanese air forces in different versions, he said.

Viktorov said the Su-30 airframe would be ready for future upgrades and can be a potent fighter for at least some three decades to come.

He said the aircraft is different from the initial basic Su-27, sold to China and Vietnam, in that it is fitted with in-flight refueling system, integrated GPS (global positioning) system and western compatible navigation system enabling it to land at any airport in the world.

"The Su-30KI can also co-operate with the MiG-29n and many parts of both aircraft are interchangeable.

Industry sources said that the Royal Malaysian Air Force has a requirement for some 30 such air superiority fighters of the SU-3-KI type.

The RMAF has 18 Mikoyan MiG-29N fighters bought in the early 90s.

The companies producing the aircraft designed by Sukhoi DB, following the international trend of mergers of companies, are now consolidating into a single holding called AVPK Sukhoi.

As a result, the design organisation JSC Sukhoi DB and KNAAPO were jointly participating in LIMA 99 show, said Victor M Tevelevich. KNAAPO is the abbreviation for Komsomolsk-on-Amur Aircraft Production Association, an organisation in Khabarovsk Territory which was visited by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his tour of the far eastern Russian territories last August.

He said, "The Russian Business circles are also taking interest in the Asian Civil Market as these are based in the Russian regions which are geographically close to the Asia-Pacific region."

An example is the joint Russian-Malaysian forest exploitation in Khabarovsk region.

During Dr Mahathir's recent visit to Russia, he paid special attention to the Khabarovsk region and visited KNAAPO, the largest aircraft-building company and the Khabarovsk Shipbuilding Yard which celebrated its 65th

anniversary this year.

At a press conference at LIMA here, the General Director of Joint-Stock Sukhoi DDB, M.A. Pogosyan said the Su-30K1 single-seat aircraft is an upgraded variant of Su-27, the mainstay of Russian fighting aviation.

It also resembled the Su-30K modernized double-seater with a capability of "air-to ground" guided weapons application.

The Su-30K1 single-seater differed from the Su-27 basic aircraft due to in-flight refueling probe, satellite navigation and short-range navigation/landing system adapted to the navigation/landing system and western standard radio beacons at airports.

"For the customer buying Sukhoi aircraft for the first time the Design Bureau is ready to make available the aircraft of Su-30 type and the additional combat capabilities including "air-to-surface" missiles," he said.

He said the SU-30 with the new weapons inventory could not be brought into the show due to the on-going test programme in Russia.

Meanwhile the Khavarovsk Shipbuilding Yard is highlighting its hovercraft type amphibious armed landing vessel which can carry up to 150 combat troops or a medium tank and two armoured personnel carriers.

Nearly 40 companies from Russia and the former Soviet republics form the largest group of foreign participants at the Lima' 99, bringing some of the most sophisticated equipment available today including the Sukhoi 30KI fighter.

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