

09/10/2001

A milestone for Malaysian achievement

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THE Sixth Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition starts today - the aerospace section at the Langkawi International Airport at Padang Mat Sirat and the maritime event at Tanjung Malai.

A total of 350 companies from 32 countries are participating in the show which will be opened today by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Although the figure is smaller compared to previous years, it is mostly due to the mergers that have taken place within the highly competitive global defence industries.

Only two companies withdrew from the event because of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in the United States: the US-based private jet manufacturer Gulf Stream and Spanish aerospace company, Construcciones Aeronauticas (Casa).

Unlike in previous years, the largest participation in Lima '01 will come from Malaysia.

The large participation of Malaysian companies - wholly local and joint venture companies - is also a milestone for the event and the local defence industry.

It is in line with the aims of the organisers to increase participation of technology and solutions providers, especially from the small- and medium-scale enterprise sector.

The highlight of Malaysia's participation in Lima will be the unveiling and flight of the country's own Eagle Aerial Reconnaissance Vehicle by Dr Mahathir tomorrow.

The ARV, developed by Composites Technology Research Malaysia and Excelnet with support from BAe Systems, will be the first ever flown at an airshow.

It will be jointly marketed by CTRM and BAe Systems.

The addition of new names to the list of countries and companies participating in Lima is perhaps an indicator of the impact the event has made in the global scene.

Three new countries will participate in Lima for the first time - Spain, Pakistan and Ukraine. All in all, there will be a total of 80 aircraft, and 31 vessels of all types at the show.

The show, which will be open to the public this weekend, offers a number of attractions to the public.

The Italian vessel San Giusto, which is the only European military vessel at the event and one that has served in both military and humanitarian campaigns, will be open to the public.

In the aerospace sector, visitors will get to see the British Red Arrows aerobatic team sponsored by BAe Systems, the MAT microlight team from Holland and the Gromov Flight Research Institute team that flies the Sukhoi Su-30MK Flanker.

The Sukhoi SU-30MK is one of the aircraft at the show which might be purchased for the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

A team from Malaysia, comprising six F/A-18D Hornet multi-role fighters and six MiG-29 Fulcrum interdiction fighters, will be performing aerial displays throughout the show.

After a decade in existence, Lima has established itself as a regional airshow which has produced opportunities for business for a large number of companies.

With more effort being put by organisers in further developing the event, and barring any unexpected emergencies, the future Limas are on track for success.

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