

09/10/2001

LIMA now a major regional event

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THE Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) shows have justified themselves as the major biennial aerospace and maritime event in the region.

At the last LIMA in 1999, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had expressed his satisfaction with the way LIMA has gone from strength to strength since the first show in 1991.

"I am in awe of this achievement," he had said. "It has been worthwhile. I didn't think the progress could be this fast... faster than my expectations."

Indeed, LIMA has earned international recognition as a place where exhibitors and traders from all over the world converge every two years to showcase or shop for state-of-the-art defence and commercial products and services.

From a giant makeshift tent at LIMA 1991, the exhibits and participants have, since the third LIMA, been ushered into the RM33 million Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre, itself a state-of-the-art facility.

In 1991, the organisers reported RM100 million in sales, not too bad for a maiden effort. Then in 1993, it doubled to RM200 million.

For the third show in 1995, 640 companies from 35 countries made their way to Langkawi, and they were well-rewarded for their efforts. An estimated RM700 million worth of aircraft deals were made and at least 17 agreements with a prospective investment of more than RM2 billion signed.

In 1997, LIMA attracted a record 784 exhibitors from over 40 countries, and 21,000 trade and 87,000 public visitors.

In 1999, the aerospace segment organised by Le Proton Lima Sdn Bhd attracted participants from about 30 countries. The maritime segment was handled by HWA Lima Sdn Bhd and it drew the participation of 20 countries.

This was no mean feat, considering the region had just weathered one of its fiercest economic challenges in decades.

At the fifth show, a total of RM300 million worth of contracts were signed, mostly involving the Government and Malaysian aerospace companies.

SME Aerospace and newly-formed BAe Systems (a merger between British Aerospace and Marconi Electronic Systems) signed a deal for the manufacture of BAe Regional Jet aircraft parts worth RM45 million. The company will also be the sole supplier of these parts for the remaining life of the aircraft, expected to be about 10 years.

Initially, the contract involves the supply of parts for 54 aircraft worth RM15.4 million expected to be fully delivered over a three-year period. All the raw materials, consumables and the leading edge skins will be supplied by BAe Systems.

SMEA also signed a contract with Italian company Alenia Aerospazio for the manufacture of Alenia aircraft forward lower lobe assembly. This industrial collaboration is expected to extend to other and more complex work packages in stages covering the various aircraft assemblies produced by the Alenia Group.

ShinMaywa Aircraft Engineering Co signed a contract with SMEA for the manufacture of machine parts of Boeing 757 and 767 aircraft.

The contract is seen as a major milestone for SMEA as for the first time Boeing commercial aircraft parts will be manufactured by the company.

Meanwhile, Airod Sdn Bhd clinched the deal with the Government for the C-130H Hercules Aircraft Upgrade Programme.

The deal will involve upgrade works on avionics and airframes, where several of the RMAF aircraft will be stretched to become tankers.

Composite Technologies Resources Malaysia Sdn Bhd also signed a deal to manufacture wing components for the Airbus A300.

It also saw the launch of the Malaysian Aerospace Industries Association.

At this year's LIMA, the Government is expected to sign a few procurement deals.

One is the Royal Malaysian Navy deal involving the purchase of six Eurocopter's Fennec helicopters.

Official negotiations have concluded and the two parties may be ready to sign the contract during the show.

And, the highlight of LIMA 2001 will be the debut of the CTRM/BAE Systems Eagle X-TS manned and unmanned aerial aircraft.

It is an event like LIMA that will provide the Eagle X-TS with a strong marketing and sales strategy for prospective buyers.

The Malaysian-developed aircraft has a great potential in the defence-related industry if given the right exposure and promotion.

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