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LIMA a success story since its inception

THE biennial Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) 2001 is the sixth since the event was first introduced in 1991. The event showcases the world's maritime and aerospace products and technologies in this region.

As the region's premier showcase of the latest state-of-the-art equipment and technology in the aerospace, air defence and civil aviation industries, LIMA is THE place for companies to show off their high-tech innovations to the growing defence markets of the Asia-Pacific region.

It is fully supported by the Malaysian Government through the Defence Ministry, which heads a high-level Cabinet committee to oversee the success of the event.

The event is held from October 9 to 14 this year.

As in the past two events, the aerospace segment of LIMA is organised by Le Proton Lima Sdn Bhd while the maritime segment is handled by HW Lima Sdn Bhd.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Abdul Razak said LIMA has undoubtedly been a success story since its inception despite the fact that it is held in Langkawi.

"It has received widespread support, global in nature, and the number of participating companies have been quite impressive over the years."

He pointed out, however, that LIMA today cannot be compared with when it first started in 1991.

"One has to take into account the fact that the defence industry itself is undergoing restructuring and amalgamation of companies. We cannot make comparisons in terms of the number of participating companies because of the mergers and acquisitions taking place," he said, adding that quality of the participating companies is equally important.

He expressed his optimism that LIMA will continue to be marked on the calendar of international aerospace and maritime exhibitions as it is well established.

He added that LIMA has also given equal emphasis to the aerospace and maritime segments as there is now a balanced representation of both at the show.

And the Government, he added, will continue to support the event.

"No international shows can do without government support, directly or indirectly," he added.

LIMA 2001 is set to be the region's largest aerospace exhibition where exhibitors will have access to top level defence and government decision makers from the Asia Pacific Rim who would take time off to visit the show.

It promises to be the platform for manufacturers and supporting services from both local home grown and international industries to market their products in the rapidly expanding Asia Pacific region.

"... a productive platform for us to appreciate what is available as leading edge technology. It is expensive to send big delegations to airshows.

"At LIMA, people down the line, even the technicians, have the opportunity to appreciate and to see for themselves the new products and technology available."

He added that local players are also taking advantage of LIMA and the opportunity it provides to showcase locally-manufactured products as well

as our technological capabilities.

"The process is on-going where we have to keep on showing the world what we have and what we can do," he said.

Mohd Najib said the success of LIMA can be measured in several ways. From the organisers' point of view, it will be in terms of participation.

"That in absolute term, how we fare against other shows within and outside the region."

Another is the kind of business deals, and new contracts and opportunities spawn at LIMA.

"Also, we can look at the general profile of Malaysia and Langkawi on the world map. LIMA has created the awareness of the country."

Indeed, LIMA 2001 is one of the most important regional aerospace and maritime shows in the Asia-Pacific region. The event will be attended by Asean and other Asia-Pacific political decision-makers, top military commanders, corporate leaders and industry professionals.

The event is more of an avenue for exhibitors and buyers to develop new businesses or reinforce long-standing relationships.

LIMA, too, has been successful in exposing state-of-the-art aircraft, vessels and equipment.

At the previous LIMA in 1999, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had expressed his satisfaction with the way LIMA has grown from strength to strength since its 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 the 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 (MIEC), 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, sales figures 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 effort. 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 alone attracted participants from about 30 countries while the maritime segment 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 sealed, mostly involving the Government and Malaysian aerospace companies.

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. Malaysia will promote this aggressively in the future.

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