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LIMA-Organiser

LIMA 01 WILL STILL BE A SUCCESS, SAYS THE ORGANISER

LANGKAWI, Oct 8 (Bernama) -- The organiser of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition (LIMA 2001) is confident that the exhibition will be a roaring success despite several companies having announced their withdrawals in the wake of the Sept 11 attacks on the United States.

Le Proton executive chairman Datuk Radzi Manan said today the withdrawals of multinational companies like CASA of Spain, United States's Gulfstream and Kaman from LIMA 2001 did little to hamper the expected success of the biennial event.

"The success of Lima 2001 does not depend on certain countries," he said at a briefing for journalist at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre (MIEC), the main venue for the event's aerospace segment, here.

The exhibition, which will be officially opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow, had received several withdrawals from aerospace companies as well as aerobatic teams.

The maritime segment of LIMA 2001 will be held at Tanjung Malai.

World-renowned aerobatic teams the Red Arrows of Britain and Thunderbirds of the US have withdrawn their participation leaving the organiser with Gromov Flight Research team from Russia and the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) aerobatic team.

The companies cited the uncertainties surrounding the world as the US prepared its armed forces to attack Afghanistan which is suspected of harbouring billionaire Osama bin Laden, the chief suspect for the Sept 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington.

The US launched air strikes on targets in Afghanistan Sunday.

Radzi said the organiser expected the number of companies participating to swell to over 300 as it was still receiving last-minute exhibitors.

The number of companies participating in LIMA this year had in fact increased by 10 per cent from the last one held two years ago, he said.

"This year's event will be bigger and more successful than the one we had two years ago. The buildup towards it was impressive and aggressive," he said.

Asked on the number of aircraft in LIMA 2001 after the withdrawals, he said there would be over 30 aircraft of all makes and designs participating in the event, including five from the US.

Boeing's FA-18 E/F Super Hornet would be arriving tomorrow, he said, adding that two FA-15 Eagles and a transport aircraft from the US had already arrived.

The Super Hornet's arrival is expected to create an air of excitement among the visitors to LIMA 2001 as the fighter is the main rival to Russia's SU-30 MK for the RMAF's requirement to acquire new fighter jets.

The exhibition has also seen the strong presence of the British with BAE Systems leading the pack as well as South Africa which had wanted to sell its attack helicopter, the Rooivalk to the RMAF.

Radzi said another indicator that the biggest dual services exhibition in the region did not suffer much from the withdrawals was the number of visitors checked-in at the various hotels in the island.

He said the hotels had registered almost 90 per cent bookings.

-- BERNAMA

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