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Mahathir-LIMA (Terrorism)

NEW SYSTEMS NEEDED TO COMBAT TERRORISM, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

LANGKAWI, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged research institutions to apply new systems and technologies to combat terrorism as world leaders try to identify their causes and try to remove them.

The Prime Minister said there would have to be new systems for intelligence gathering, new electronic devices, new surveillance capacities and better photography from outer space.

Opening the 2001 Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA '01) at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre, here, he said there would also have to be more sensitive listening devices, early detection of poisonous chemicals, remote controls of aircraft and a whole lot of new ideas and gadgets.

He said the current concept of war and defence have changed following the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in Washington.

"Conventional weapons have been rendered practically obsolete. Of course we will have to retain the conventional weapons because we still believe in the old adage that to have peace we must prepare for war," he said.

The prime minister said nations must arm themselves "to the teeth" in order to deter their enemies.

"Unfortunately against terrorists it is not enough to arm ourselves to the teeth with the weapon we are familiar with. The weapons against terrorists will be very different," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in the Sept 11 attacks, both places were hit by airliners carrying 83 tonnes of fuel each.

"They were not the guided missiles which we know of, the sophisticated radio and laser guided purpose-built missiles which the powerful countries have armed themselves with, and which they believe will deter attacks against them and deliver their response to any attack against them," he said.

Nevertheless, he said, the airliners guided by suicidal pilots were as effective, or even more effective than all the highly touted missiles which people read about and fear.

"The airliners as guided missiles have damaged not just concrete and mortar and steel buildings but have thrown the most powerful economy and the whole world into a recession that is unheard of," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said the way of life of the peoples of the world have been changed in one cataclysmic moment.

"Everything that we are familiar with; our way of life has been changed radically," he said.

On the development of Malaysia's aerospace and maritime industries, Dr Mahathir said the players need to market their capabilities and products worldwide.

"Although our technical capabilities (in aerospace and maritime industries) have broadened, our business turnover is still relatively small," he said.

He said local companies need to participate in international aerospace, maritime and defence exhibitions in other parts of the world and develop an aggressive marketing strategy in order to compete successfully in the international market.

Dr Mahathir said the country's aerospace industry achieved some progress over the last few years with Malaysia currently capable of designing and manufacturing certain aircraft parts under subcontract from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) besides venturing into high-tech areas such as system integration and simulator development.

One local company, SME Aerospace for example produces a variety of metal-based aerospace products for export and the development of the first ever Malaysian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) by Composites Technology Research Malaysia (CTRM).

UAV can be used for military and non-military purposes including coastal surveillance and monitoring of open burning, illegal logging, piracy and the movement of illegal immigrants, he said.

The government, he said, was committed to further developing its aerospace and marine transport industries as priority industries.

"To this end, and in order to accelerate the industrial growth, we will look very favourably to defence equipment suppliers who could offer attractive industrial offset programmes along with their proposal," he said.

He said transfer of technology should be more industry focussed and not merely offering unproductive training programmes that do not address specific industrial or project requirements.

"The supplier offering the most attractive offset programmes in terms of value and types of technology with sustainable business opportunities will command substantial weightage," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that being always supportive of the development of aerospace and maritime industries, the government had established, among others, the Malaysian Aerospace Council and the Malaysian Defence Industry Council.

He believed LIMA could serve as an effective gateway for international aerospace and maritime corporate players seeking smart partnerships with local companies to gain competitive advantage.

This year's LIMA is the sixth in the series since it was introduced in 1991.

-- BERNAMA

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