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Our `top guns' dazzle the crowd at opening of Lima '01

RMAF TOP GUNS ... With just 10 metres between them to spare, two Royal Malaysian Air Force MiG-29N Fulcrum fighter jets performed a high-speed zoom past at the opening day of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima '01) exhibition yesterday.

The RMAF pilots, based in Kuantan, thrilled the crowd in a 12-minute display at the Langkawi International Airport.

The absence of the British Red Arrows and Thunderbirds of the United States did not take away the glamour from the show, and the RMAF pilots displayed their precision and skills to prove that they are also among the top guns.

Among the VIPs watching the spectacular aerial display were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and foreign trade exhibitors.

Dr Mahathir had earlier officially opened Lima '01, which promises to be another successful event in the Lima series.

After the MiGs departed, another RMAF team comprising F/A 18 Hornet jets took to the skies and put up another roaring show.

Despite the concern about travelling abroad after the Sept 11 attacks in Washington and New York, Lima '01 will receive a nine per cent increase in the number of government guests.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the guests included ministers, secretaries-general, defence forces' chiefs, service chiefs and police chiefs.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Najib said it was unfortunate that the Sept 11 attacks had had such a profound global impact, and Lima was not spared.

The number of aircraft participating this year had declined by about 20 per cent from Lima '99, he said.

There are 300 exhibitors from 22 countries participating in Lima '01.

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