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`LIMA has shown tremendous progress'

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday he was satisfied with this year's Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) exhibition although there were some last-minute withdrawals from exhibitors.

This includes the withdrawal of the much-acclaimed aerobatics team - the British Red Arrows and the Thunderbirds of the US.

"I am satisfied with this year's LIMA although a few (exhibiting companies) had withdrawn for certain reasons," he told reporters at the Langkawi International Airport before departing for Kuala Lumpur. The Prime Minister had arrived in Langkawi on Monday night.

"(Nonetheless,) I find the number of participants and visitors at LIMA 2001 bigger compared with previous LIMAS," he added.

The aerospace segment of LIMA 2001 saw a 5 per cent uptake in floor space, which is taken up by some 300 exhibiting companies from 27 countries, while the maritime segment registered a 10 per cent increase.

The maritime show also saw some 300 exhibiting companies, but from 22 countries.

The biennial trade show, the sixth since 1991, saw 10 US companies taking part in the six-day aerospace exhibition which ends this Sunday. The UK has the highest number of participants with 13, followed by Russia with 10.

The Prime Minister also expressed admiration with the aerobatic display given by the Royal Malaysian Air Force pilots.

"We can take pride of their performance. The pilots of our F18 (F/A-18D Hornet) and MiG-29 (MiG-29N Fulcrum fighter jets) performed admirably although they are combat pilots and not aerobatic pilots. They gave an exciting aerial display," he added.

Dr Mahathir said both the maritime and aerospace trade shows had shown tremendous progress, particularly the former.

"The participation of Malaysian companies at the maritime exhibition is remarkable. There was not enough floor space for Malaysian exhibitors to the extent that they had to take up space designated for foreign participants," he said.

He added that the progress of Malaysian technology was also evident at the show.

"Technology in the country is progressing to a higher level based on the advanced exhibits put up on display at both the aerospace and maritime shows," he said.

Commenting on the deals secured during the trade show so far, Dr Mahathir said, "There were many boats sold (at the maritime trade show) and many parties have shown interest in our Eagle ARV (unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicle)."

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