

Good avenue to venture into international market

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THE ongoing DSA 2002 is a good avenue for local defence industry players, especially the newcomers, to step into the lucrative international market for military products.

While established local companies like DRB-Defence Technologies Sdn Bhd (Deftech) enjoy the co-operation of main stream players, newcomers are not left in the dark.

In fact, new local companies have more on offer in the DSA 2002 where scores of foreign ancillary equipment producers are hunting for partners.

If not directly into joint-ventures or production technology, established light equipment producers are at least looking for marketing partners.

Air-Pol Parachute Works from Poland for instance is vigorously looking for a Malaysian partner to launch its products in the South East Asian market.

"It need not necessarily be a joint-venture arrangement from day one. Malaysian companies can start by teaming with us to penetrate the regional market and later we could move into a more strategic partnership.

"It could depend on how the market develops," Air-Pol deputy manager Ireneusz Kramarski said.

Kramarski explained that most of the European companies participating in the DSA 2002 had a similar vision or have already established such working arrangements elsewhere.

"Malaysia, with all the infrastructure and with full commitment from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is a strategic point for our debut in this region.

"Apart from the Malaysian Armed Forces, Indonesia, with its military capacity and future modernisation is probably the single largest market in the region, and

Malaysian companies could capitalise from this scenario," he said.

Air-Pol has more than 50 years experience in producing high speed troop deployment parachutes for the military.

There are two types of sophisticated parachutes being offered to the Armed Forces, each with its own opening system.

"One is the typical version while the latest in our range of parachutes is the special two-stage opening parachute which also comes with a stabiliser.

"With the latest product, you can actually get off the aircraft at 4,500 metres above sea-level (with the stabiliser) and only activate the parachute at the altitude of 450 metres," Kramarski explained.

Another Polish company, Kupczak Products, a producer of high quality all terrain/weather military boots is also participating in the exhibition with similar expectations.

The company's owner, Bogustaw Kupczak said he was looking into Malaysian partners who could market the revolutionary safety boots which is made of 100 different components.

"We want Malaysia to be our launch pad for this region. South East Asia is an emerging market for the international defence industry and I feel Malaysia has all the ingredients to be the centre of such activities."

Another company, a first-time participant in the exhibition, Marshall Specialist Vehicles Ltd (Marshall SV) is also expecting similar ventures and further expand their market in the region, particularly in Malaysia.

Its sales and marketing manager Andy Cross said apart from Malaysia, the company's presence in Asia includes East Timor, Middle East and New Zealand.