

Najib: Over RM1bil worth of deals sealed

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LANGKAWI: Deals and agreements worth more than RM1bil were sealed during the seventh edition of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) exhibition.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said contracts worth RM223.6mil were secured, followed by RM316mil in Letters of Offer and Acceptance (LOA) and RM524.2mil in Letters of Intent (LOI).

The biggest LOA deal, worth RM286.3mil, was for the purchase of 11 Agusta A109 light observation helicopters from Augusta Westland.

An LOI deal worth RM250mil was sealed for the purchase of new spare parts for the Royal Malaysian Air Force's aircraft fleet.

These deals meant that Lima 2003 was a big success, placing it as the region's biggest trade show, Najib said after launching *The Wings of an Eagle*, a book by Datuk A. Kadir Jasin which showcases Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's legacy to Langkawi and his contributions to the Lima exhibitions.



"Lima 2003 was also a platform for local exhibitors to showcase their capabilities and to attract joint ventures for transfer of technology programmes," said Najib.

He said Lima 2003 had "clashed" with air shows in Turkey and China, and he hoped that this could be avoided in the future.

He acknowledged that China was Asia's top arms producer and that it should be invited for the next Lima in 2005.

Asked about escalating costs incurred in hosting and attending the Lima series, Najib said it was the same for other defence trade exhibits.

Many here have voiced their concern over the high

cost involved in attending Lima 2003, especially charges imposed by hotels on this island resort.

"Nobody should bear a grudge against hoteliers as they suffered losses during the SARS outbreak. It is only logical for hoteliers to recoup some losses during Lima 2003," he said.

On the next Lima, Najib said the ministry and organisers were working on a few ideas to make it among the top defence exhibitions in the world.

"The organisers will also consult Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to discuss what role he will play for the next Lima in view of his retirement this month," he said.