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BOEING-ACQUISITION

BOEING HOPES TO SEAL SUPER HORNETS DEAL BY YEAR END

By Mohd Arshi Daud

LANGKAWI, Oct 2 (Bernama) -- Boeing hopes to sell 18 units of the two-seater F/A-18 F Super Hornet to the Royal Malaysian Air Force and the deal is expected to be sealed by the end of the year, it was announced today.

Negotiations for the sale had been ongoing since the 2001 Langkawi International Maritime & Aerospace Exhibition (2001 LIMA) but the time taken by the Malaysian government to decide was "as expected", said Anthony M Parasida, president of the F/A-18 Programme in the Boeing Company's Integrated Defense Systems.

"It's a very important decision for Malaysia, it's good for the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) and for the people of Malaysia. I think the Malaysian government is doing a good job to make this the best possible jet deal," he told Bernama on the sidelines of the aerospace show of the 2003 LIMA here.

Saying that Boeing had put in much efforts to meet RMAF's requirements, he added that the deal was not meant to be signed during this year's LIMA which ends on Sunday.

Parasida said while he could not speak on behalf of the Malaysian government on the length of time it had taken to make its decision on the Super Hornet purchase, it was nevertheless "a very major decision."

As part of the arrangement to sell the Super Hornets, the Boeing Company has also devised an offset programme which takes into consideration the requirements of the Eighth Malaysia Plan. Under its offset programme, the Boeing Company wants to help expand the knowledge-based environment in Malaysia.

In addition, the company also wants to work with local industry players in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) to develop software for its own requirements.

Parasida said the Boeing Company would like to include bio-technology in the offset programme and this could be done through its relations with foundations and universities in the US which have expertise on the subject.

He also said he was impressed with the availability of facilities, skills and technology locally and these would make the transfer of technology by Boeing into a "win-win situation for both sides."

Asked on the expected delivery of the Super Hornets should Malaysia decide to acquire the strike fighter, Parasida said: "Hopefully we will be talking about it coming into service at the 2005 LIMA."

He also praised LIMA for making it possible for the Boeing Company to promote its products such as the F/A-18.

"Yesterday, we had a great opportunity to have the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) to get into the F/A-18 on static display.

"We had the opportunity to spend 30 minutes with him, he gets to sit in the airplane and see the technology, look at the airplane and see the parts that Malaysian companies will be fabricating for the Super Hornet," Parasida said.

"That kind of access, we would never have without a show like LIMA."

As for the likely Super Hornet components that Malaysian companies could produce should Malaysia decide to buy the aircraft, he said they might include machine parts, sheet metal parts, composite parts and other advanced technology that went into the fighter jets. -- BERNAMA

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