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Mahathir-Lima

LIMA OFFERS VENUE FOR AERIAL AND MARITIME PLAYERS TO EXHIBIT PRODUCTS

LANGKAWI, Sept 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Lima provides a good opportunity for aerial and maritime industries to exhibit products to deal with the situation arising not just from the threat of terror and war but also problems posed by rapid growth in the aerial and marine transport trade.

At the same time, the Prime Minister said, countries in the region need to acquire some capabilities to supply themselves with their non-defence need.

The transfer of technologies and manufacturing capabilities were therefore essential to these nations, he said when opening the five-day Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 2003 (Lima '03) at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre (MIEC) here.

Dr Mahathir said that Lima '03 offers ample opportunities to everyone including exhibitors, industry players and government officials to view and consider the impressive array of military hardware and civilian equipment that were put on display.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Second Finance Minister Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis and Transport Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy.

The Prime Minister said that Lima '03 was an excellent platform for exhibitors to market their products to Malaysia and the region, and they should avail themselves to the opportunity to network to form strategic partnerships and alliances including joint ventures with local companies.

"At the same time, we hope your participation will also provide a better understanding of our local industrial capabilities and the investment opportunities and incentives provided by us in our desire to make Malaysia a regional hub for manufacturing and marketing activities, for civil and military aerospace and maritime products," he said.

Noting a significant number of Malaysian companies in Lima '03, he said that these companies were seeking to form joint-venture opportunities with foreign companies which had expertise in sophisticated technologies.

"And they have knowledge and insights into markets of South-East Asia. Mutually beneficial results can come from cooperation between Malaysia and foreign companies," Dr Mahathir said.

He also said that Lima had and would continue to benefit Malaysia and the Asia Pacific region which was arguably the second largest market in the world for aerospace and maritime products.

According to forecasts, the total market for defence exports to Asia alone is predicted to rise to US\$70 billion (RM266 billion) between 2002 and 2006. And it is expected to continue to rise.

It is for this reason that the Malaysian government is supporting the hosting of exhibitions. "We are confident that the Lima series will continue to be held biennially to meet objectives of which it was first mooted," he said.

The Prime Minister said many countries in the region were anxious not only to upgrade their air defences but also to acquire technology.

For the South-East Asian countries, he said, air defence and maritime defence were very important because most of the countries were made up of huge archipelagos with long coastline and innumerable islands that need to be secured.

Ships and aircraft were needed for surveillance to ensure a safe course for ships, particularly against piracy and for security of territorial waters and economic zones, said Dr Mahathir

Malaysia, he said, had built a series of radar stations along the western coast of the peninsula to enable the country to oversee traffic along the Straits of Melaka and was putting in more patrol boats and aerial surveillance.

"We are also planning to install radar stations all along the Sarawak and Sabah coasts," he said.

"While we accept that the Straits of Melaka is an international maritime passage, the world and in particular the nations whose ships make use of this waterway should also help in securing the passage.

"There is also a need to dredge certain parts of the Straits to ensure that ships do not run aground, especially now when container ships are growing in size and capacity," said Dr Mahathir.

On another note, he said after Lima `01 a wave of uncertainty swept across the world following the increasing threat of terrorism and military action and in this year due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak.

These had slowed down the world economy, the air travel and tourist industries and caused diminished demand for aircraft, especially commercial aircraft. But there were now signs that the East Asia travel trade was making swift recovery, said the Prime Minister.

"Tourists arrivals in South-East Asia are regaining to pre-SARS and pre-Sept 11 levels. This will lead to increase demands for commercial passenger aircraft in Asia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that orders for new aircraft by low-cost airlines had outstripped those by the normal cost airlines.

"Malaysia has its own low-cost airline (Air Asia) and it appears to be doing very well," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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