

29 SEP 2003

RED ARROWS PROMISE GREAT DISPLAY AT LIMA 03

LANGKAWI, Sept 29 (Bernama) -- The Red Arrows Aerobatic Team has promised to put up a splendid display during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) exhibition starting tomorrow with several death defying aerial formations.

Its squadron leader, Spike Jepsen, said the team, which travelled 5,600km to be at LIMA 03, has placed great importance to its performance here and promised to deliver its best before the Malaysian crowd.

"It's great to be here. We have always looked forward to performing a good show at LIMA. We are very grateful to the organisers, the Malaysian Government,, and the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, for inviting us.

"The team has long regarded LIMA as the most important airshow in its calendar," he told reporters during a visit to the British aerobatic team at Padang Matsirat International Airport here today.

He said before coming to Langkawi the team had given 60 displays this season. It has over the years performed in 52 countries, staging over 3,600 displays.

According to Jepsen, the team, which comprises nine pilots, including two spare pilots, spends six months each year practising for a forthcoming display.

"The "Reds" hone to perfection display and it is achieved only at the expense of many hours of hard work. The pilots are picked from the best of the RAF's fast jet flyers for a role that is sought after by many but attained by only a few," he said.

He said the applicants for the Red Arrows must be rated higher than average in their flying skills and have at least one operational tour on a frontline aircraft such as the Tornado, Harrier or Jaguar.

For tomorrow's opening ceremony display, he said, the team would execute a difficult and unique formation called "The Fountain Split" which involved all nine aircraft performing a loop in front of the audience before splitting in nine different directions.

The team, which utilises Hawk T1A aircraft, would perform 24 aerial formations during a 20-minute display.

Jepsen said the team, including their support technical crew, would fly to Thailand after performing at LIMA before continuing their air shows in India, Bahrain, Qatar and Egypt.

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MHI MUN SRI