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Aerospace players return with a bang

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THE Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) 2003 aerospace segment will see a return of major industry players following a two-year hiatus.

The event received a lukewarm response in 2001 following the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

"This year's show sees the return of the aerospace industry's biggest players, giving Lima 2003 its due recognition as one of the premier defence events on the international calendar," Le Proton LIMA executive chairman Datuk Mohd Radzi Manan said in a recent interview.

As in previous years, the New Straits Times is the official media partner of Lima for aerospace and maritime.

This year's Lima has been billed as the year's biggest event in Southeast Asia, and will be the place for companies to show off their innovations.

Le Proton Lima is the organiser of the aerospace segment, while HW Lima is responsible for the maritime segment.

With fewer than two weeks remaining for the event, 510 companies from 25 countries have confirmed their participation.

These include United Kingdom's BAE Systems and Rolls Royce; Russia's Rosoboroneexport; Denel (South Africa); Northrop Grumman Corp, Raytheon Co, The Boeing Co and Lockheed Martin (United States); Ericsson and Saab AB (Sweden); Matra BAE Dynamics MBDA and Thales (France); Alenia Aeronautica SpA, Galileo Avionica and Augusta Westland (Italy) and Motorsich (Ukraine).

Mohd Radzi said the Royal Australia Air Force would bring one of its F-111 fighter planes and this was a first for Lima.

"The biennial event was Dr Mahathir's brainchild and this attribution was a way of saying thank you to him as the event was the catalyst for developing the aerospace sector," he said.

This year's event is expected to attract 100,000 visitors representing governments, industry players and potential clients.

The first Lima in 1991 drew 150; two years ago, more than 350 companies from 32 countries took part.

The aerospace segment, the seventh such exhibition since its inception in 1991, will be held at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre near Langkawi International Airport beginning today.

The MIEC has a built up area of 22,000 square metres and 49,400 square metres of outdoor display area coupled with state-of-the-art facilities.

The static display will feature 86 aircrafts and several aviation aerobatics teams will also be displaying their skills.

This will include displays by UK's Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows, whose members skipped Lima 2001.

Other aerobatic displays will be performed by pilots flying the US Air Force F18Fs and F16s, Russia's Sukhoi SU 30s and the Royal Malaysian Air Force's MiG-29N Fulcrum and F/A-18D Hornets.