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Security at Lima '03 to be beefed up

LANGKAWI, Mon. - Security at this year's Langkawi Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (Lima '03) will be provided by over 1,000 police and military personnel, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.

Najib said the number was higher than in previous years and this follows recent developments in the region.

He said 900 policemen and over 100 men from the special forces units of the navy and air force would be stationed here from Sept 30 to Oct 5.

Najib, who inspected preparations at Awana Porto Malai and the Mahsuri International Exhibition Hall, which are the sites for the separate maritime and aerospace exhibitions, had earlier chaired a Cabinet Committee meeting on Lima 03 at Helang Hotel.

He later witnessed the signing of an agreement on the scope of duties between his ministry and the two organisers - Le Proton Lima Sdn Bhd, organiser of the aerospace exhibition, and HW Lima Sdn Bhd, the organiser of the maritime exhibition.

Najib said work was progressing smoothly and everything would be on schedule.

"I feel we can still put up a spectacular show despite the current global situation as we have received good response," he said.

He said 25 countries had confirmed participation in the aerospace event with 86 aircraft to be put on display, while 350 companies would be taking up booths at the exhibition centre.

Najib said there was good response for the maritime event with confirmed participation from 15 countries and 40 ships.

Saudi Arabia who will be making their debut are among the countries confirmed.

Najib said the British Red Arrow aerobatic team which had been appearing every year since 1993, except for 2001, would be back.

The Red Arrows pulled out of Lima 2001 following the Sept 11 attacks that year.

Other international aerobatics teams which have confirmed participation are from the United States, Spain, Holland and Russia.

The RMAF would participate with four F5E jets, five MiG-29, six F18D and the Super Lynx aircraft.

The show will be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 30.

Najib said the National Space Agency would also be taking up a booth to promote the country's aerospace programme.

A dinner would be held on Oct 3 to honour Dr Mahathir who retires next month.

The dinner will be attended by the participants and members of the local community.

"We are planning a surprise for Dr Mahathir as this will be his last appearance here as the Prime Minister," said Najib.