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DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

'PREPARE OUR MEN FOR MODERN WARFARE'

Defence spending will grow as armed forces modernise equipment, says PM

LANGKAWI

THE traditional and non-traditional threats in the region will see defence expenditure continue to rise, and the defence industry must change dramatically as new problems emerge.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday new and changing threats required the defence industry's role to change alongside.

This, he said, was because these new challenges required further research and development, though this would increase the overall costs and pricing of defence products and services.

Speaking at the launch of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition (Lima) 2017, Najib said the defence in-

dustry had a significant role to play in ensuring armed forces are equipped properly.

"We need to equip our fighting men with the capabilities required to face modern warfare, both symmetrical and asymmetrical, and Lima 2017 brings together major aerospace and maritime firms from around the world to demonstrate their state-of-the-art static and aerial displays and cutting edge technologies.

"We take this very seriously here in Malaysia.

"The government has allocated RM26 billion under the 11th Malaysia Plan to cover defence, public order and enforcement.

"Our defence spending will continue to grow as the armed forces have embarked on a long-term

capability plan to modernise and upgrade the equipment that we have at the moment."

Najib also said Malaysia's future prospects in the maritime and aerospace industries were strong, as the country was situated in the heart of one of the most vibrant maritime and aerospace markets, with strong connections to the region, and an open and business-friendly economy.

"We recently received a new accolade from BAV Consulting and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. In their 2017 survey, they awarded Malaysia first place... the best country to invest in.

"Even in these unsettled times, Malaysia posted a growth of 4.2 per cent in 2016. A similar figure is expected for this year, with higher growth anticipated in 2018 and beyond.

"In fact, PriceWaterhouseCoopers recently reported that Malaysia is expected to earn the 25th highest gross domestic prod-

uct in the world by 2030," Najib said.

Najib then declared the show open, and this was followed shortly afterwards with the sound and sight of a Royal Malaysian Air Force F/A-18D Hornet screaming through the air in a low-level fast flypast as part of the show's opening gambit. The Hornet was soon joined by two more aircraft from the RMAF's 18 Squadron.

The opening gambit, in fact, was a show of firepower and capabilities. Also joining the show were two SU-30MKM jets, five Hawk advanced jet trainers and seven Pilatus PC-7, trailing colourful smoke behind them.

All performed manoeuvres in the air, but the surprise for the crowd came when three of the RMAF's Airbus A400M did a flypast. Just before reaching the end of the runway, the lead aircraft split from the other two and made a tight turn that belied the size of this transport aircraft

which is aptly named Atlas.

Three EC725 long-range tactical transport helicopters then flew overhead and performed manoeuvres which only skilled pilots can pull off, before one simulated attacking a ground target and "set off" an explosion.

The curtain call involved a flypast of all the aircraft involved in the opening gambit.

Present at the launch yesterday were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

Lima 2017 sees the participation of more than 300 defence and security delegations, 55 visiting warships and boats and 106 aircraft.

Page 1 pic: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking at the opening of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 2017 yesterday.

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