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PM: Nation must enhance defences

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RM26bil allocated to protect Malaysia against new regional threats

LANGKAWI: Malaysia's armed forces have embarked on a long term plan to modernise and upgrade, said the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said its defence expenditure would therefore go up given the traditional and non-traditional threats facing the region and beyond.

He said a total of RM26bil has been allocated under the 11th Malaysia Plan to bolster the nation's defence, security and enforcement.

"Defence and security are of paramount importance to any nation, and are vital for maintaining territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

"Defence industries have a significant role to play in ensuring that our armed forces are properly equipped," he said.

The Prime Minister said the role of the industry was also changing dramatically as new threats arose, requiring more research and development which would increase the cost and pricing of defence products and services.

But there was a need to equip the country's fighting men with better equipment and capabilities, he said, adding that Malaysia took this seriously, which was why its defence bill was on the rise.

Najib was speaking at the launch of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima)



2017 exhibition at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre yesterday.

International affairs expert Oh Ei Sun welcomed Najib's announcement, saying that it was high time Malaysia focused on its defence capabilities.

"I think it is time we increase our

spending, especially on coastal defence.

"Malaysia is surrounded by sea; we face threats from pirates in Straits of Malacca and the Sulu Sea," said Oh, who is principal adviser at the Pacific Research Centre of Malaysia.

He pointed out that Malaysia was

Through the looking glass:

(From left) Airod Sdn Bhd senior principal engineer Intan Safinaz Syed Kassim and president Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Johan demonstrating 'glass cockpit' flight instruments to Najib, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai during Lima 2017.

to ensure funds are spent where they are most needed," he said.

On another matter, the Prime Minister said that by 2030, the aerospace industry was targeted to generate an annual revenue of RM55.2bil and create more than 32,000 high-income jobs.

This is compared to a revenue of RM12.7bil and an employment of 21,000 skilled workers as of the end of last year.

"Malaysia contributes a significant amount to the world newbuilding orderbook and ranks 26th on the list of nations that have a large merchant fleet.

"For the commercial sector, it is estimated around RM700mil in repair and conversion work will be available for local shipyards," Najib said.

Lima 2017 has gathered more than 55% of the world's top 100 maritime and aerospace companies – 520 from 35 countries are represented.

More than 300 defence and security delegations, 55 visiting warships and vessels, 106 aircraft and 467 journalists from TV stations, radio, national dailies and trade magazines are also here.

friendly with all its neighbours and that it was unlikely to face an invasion by air.

This makes Malaysia's coasts its biggest vulnerability, he said.

"Secondly, we need to plug our leakages. The nature of defence is that a lot of things are kept secret.

"We need a mechanism in place



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