

**More than 100 airlines to join in
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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday opened the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace 2011 exhibition (Lima '11), highlighting the airshow's military technology as well as defence and security significance to regional and national strategic interests.

Two F-5E Tiger II aircraft zoomed past the airport runway, signalling the beginning of the event. Present were Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and other dignitaries.

Who could blame anyone for waiting for the aircraft with the likes of the Eurofighter Typhoon, Dassault Rafale, Boeing F/A-18EF Super Hornet, the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF)'s own Sukhoi Su-30MKM Flanker and MiG-29N Fulcrums, as well as the country's aerobatics team, Krisakti.

Najib said Lima '11 was not just about the latest military technology but also about the commercial sectors of the maritime and aerospace industries, which were exhibited here for the first time this year.

"More than 100 airlines operating in the Asean region will be attending this year's event as well as decision-makers from sectors such as oil and gas, and maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO)."

He said technology-intensive sectors such as shipbuilding and ship repair and aerospace MRO continued to be significant contributors to Malaysia's economy.

"Last year alone, the shipbuilding and ship repair industry generated more than US\$2.3 billion (RM7.2 billion) while MRO and aerospace manufacturing contributed US\$1.73 billion.

"These sectors provide jobs for 44,000 people, many of them in highly skilled professional roles."

Najib added that skills and wages in Malaysia were rising as the country continued on its path towards achieving a high-income status.

He said the nation needed to face stiff competition in terms of foreign investment once it was no longer considered as a "cheap" place to invest.

"That is why the Malaysia Aerospace Council last year helped to establish the Aerospace Malaysia Innovation Centre (AMIC), an exciting new industry-led research and technology centre of excellence that will drive progress in Malaysian aerospace expertise.

"AMIC has brought together key global players such as EADS, Rolls-Royce and CTRM to help shape the future of Malaysian aviation, working in close collaboration with local universities to raise not just the skills but also the global reputation of our researchers, engineers and

scientists."

Najib later witnessed the signing of two agreements at the National Aerospace and Defence Industries (Nadi) booth at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre.

The first was a collaboration agreement between Mara and Nadi to enable both parties to collaborate in developing Bumiputera human capital in the aerospace industry. The second agreement for technical consultancy services was signed between Airod Sdn Bhd and Malaysian Aerospace Engineering Sdn Bhd.

Najib also witnessed, via live video feed, the production roll-out of the first of the RMAF's 12 Eurocopter EC725 helicopters at the company's facility in Marignane, France. Delivery of the aircraft will begin next year.

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