

Najib Opens LIMA 2011
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LANGKAWI, Dec 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on Tuesday opened the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 2011 (LIMA '11), underscoring that defence and security are of paramount importance to regional and national strategic interests.

Against the backdrop of more than 400 companies from 35 countries present at the 11th edition of LIMA, he pointed out that defence and security ensured not only territorial integrity but also the sovereignty that all countries hold dear.

He said that Asia today enjoyed the fastest-growing economy in the world, and defence expenditure was no exception.

"Aerospace and maritime spending is surging, and is set to rise yet further as governments continue to tackle both traditional and non-traditional security threats," Najib said when opening Malaysia's premier defence and security show at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre (MIEC), here.

Present were his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, former prime minister and LIMA's founding figure Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi as well as foreign defence and security chiefs.

Najib said: "There can be no doubting the bravery and heroism of our men and women in uniform, and before they risk their lives to protect us, it's our duty to ensure they have the best tools for the job.

"That means giving them the latest, safest, most cutting-edge equipment capable of meeting the challenges of modern warfare."

He noted that LIMA was not just about the latest military technology as it was also about the commercial sectors of the maritime and aerospace industries which were exhibiting here for the first time.

Over half of the world's top 100 maritime and aerospace suppliers are present for the show.

According to LIMA organisers, on display are 65 aircraft as well as 14 warships from around the world.

Najib said technology-intensive sectors such as shipbuilding and ship repair and aerospace maintenance, repair and overhaul (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 (RM7.26 billion), while MRO and aerospace manufacturing contributed about US\$1.73 billion (RM5.46 billion).

"Taken together, these sectors provide jobs for more than 44,000 people, many of them in highly-skilled professional roles," he said.

The prime minister said skills and wages in Malaysia were rising as the country continues on the path towards high-income status.

"But as this transformation occurs, we must be prepared to face stiff competition for foreign investments once we're no longer perceived as a 'cheap' place to invest," he said.

Najib mentioned that the Malaysian Aerospace Council last year helped establish the Aerospace Malaysia Innovation Centre (AMIC), an industry-led research and technology centre of excellence that would drive progress in Malaysian aerospace expertise.

AMIC, he said, had already 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 skills as well the global reputation of Malaysian researchers, engineers and scientists.

"So, we're putting in place the skills, the infrastructure. What we need now is to build the market demand that will drive expansion now and in the future," he said.

Najib's speech also alluded to the launch of the national Aerospace Blueprint back in 1997, and, now, the creation of a similar strategic plan for Malaysia's maritime businesses.

"The Malaysian Shipbuilding/Ship Repair Industry Strategic Plan 2020 charts a clear course for the industry to sail ahead," he said.

Following the LIMA opening, Najib witnessed the signing of a number of aerospace industry-related pacts.

They include the technical consultancy services agreement between Airod Sdn Bhd and Malaysian Aerospace Engineering Sdn Bhd (MAE) in relation to MAE providing consultancy services to Airod for the development of the aerospace MRO cluster at the new Kunming International Airport.

Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara) also inked a strategic collaboration agreement with National Aerospace and Defence Industry Sdn Bhd (NADI) in developing competitive bumiputera human capital in high-technology aerospace industry

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