

Najib Hails LIMA 2015 As Best Ever
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LANGKAWI, March 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on Tuesday hailed this year's edition of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) Exhibition, which sees the participation of a record-breaking 512 companies from 36 countries, as the best since its inception in 1991.

Officially opening LIMA 2015, he said the number of participating companies this year exceeded the 433 registered for the last edition two years ago.

"LIMA 2015 has seen many firsts and, with the multi-faceted and much diverse exhibition this time around, it is the best LIMA we have ever had," he said at the opening ceremony, which was held at the tarmac of the Langkawi International Airport here.

Najib said LIMA 2015 was also memorable because all 10 ASEAN defence ministers attended the exhibition and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) was held for the first time in Langkawi, two days ago.

The prime minister said LIMA had come a long way since its inception in 1991 when he, as the defence minister, was tasked by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to organise the first LIMA.

Najib quipped that he had had a far more difficult task organising the first edition of LIMA than the present Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein had experienced in organising the latest edition.

"I had to build from ground zero, including ensuring that a hotel was constructed in 50 days," he said, drawing laughter from the audience.

Najib said that besides the maritime and aerospace exhibition, LIMA 2015 also saw the organising of a multi-faceted seminar including the ASEAN Youth Programme, Chiefs of Navy Roundtable Talk and the ASEAN Aviation Summit as well as a Multi Nations Counter Terrorism exercise involving the police and military.

According to him, ASEAN remained an attractive market for the global defence conglomerate, despite spending cuts experienced by the other regions.

A reputed international publication, IHS Jane's, said Najib had forecast that defence spending in ASEAN would increase to US\$44.5 billion (RM164.65 billion) in 2018 against US\$38.5 billion (RM142.45 billion) this year.

"The region remains one of the key regions in defence and other commercial sectors. Against this backdrop, LIMA is the perfect place for companies," Najib said and congratulated the organiser for ensuring that the biennial event continued to be a success.

Also present at the opening ceremony, held under Langkawi's blazing sun, were Hishammuddin; former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad; Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir and senior government officials.

All the 10 ASEAN defence ministers, who had held their two-day ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) here, also attended the event.

The opening ceremony was concluded with a 10-minute display by several fighter jets from the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) and a fly-past by the Airbus A400M Atlas, the newest asset of the air force.

LIMA 2015 will end on March 21.

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