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The Prime Minister

EVENT: At The International Airport Technology And Ground Support Exhibition (AIRPORTEX) 1996

VENUE: Langkawi, Kedah

DATE: 25 Jul 1996

TIME: 9.30 A.M.

Firstly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the distinguished guests and participants to this International Airport Technology and Ground Support Exhibition or Airportex '95. The Islands of Langkawi, well-known now as a holiday resort, have also earned a place in the aerospace industry for the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace show held here every two years. Now the Islands have been chosen to host yet another aerospace related exhibition - Airportex '96. I hope the choice of Langkawi as the site for this exhibition will be welcome by exhibitors and visitors alike because apart from the exhibition, exhibitors and visitors will be able to enjoy the many scenic attractions of this resort islands.

2. Air transport is a rapidly growing industry in South East Asia, as it is in the whole of East Asia. The success of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition was due to this. But air transport is not only about aeroplanes. More and more discerning travellers are concerned about what happens on the ground. They are concerned about the quality of airports, with their terminals and ground handling facilities. These must match the ever increasing sophistication of the aircrafts which fly passengers to myriads of destinations worldwide. In many places in South East Asia ground handling and other services leave much to be desired. At the same time there is awareness about these shortcomings and many countries in East Asia are rushing to build new airports and upgrade old ones.

3. The usual thing to do is to visit the more modern airports in other parts of the world. But an exhibition such as this will bring together the biggest number of suppliers and their products for professionals and Government representatives to view and to make primary evaluations. It will help to acquaint potential developers of airports and ground handling operators with the choice of equipment and systems which are available.

4. The last five years have seen almost explosive growth in the number of outbound leisure travellers from Japan and the newly industrialised nations of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. As disposable incomes rise in other rapidly developing nations of South East Asia, including Malaysia, and also in the populous nations of China and India, the number of new air travellers can only continue to increase in Asia.

5. This phenomenal growth, however, brings a number of challenges in its wake. Many of Asia's major international airports are already suffering from severe congestion. In some cases, passenger and cargo terminals are unable to handle the volume of traffic, especially at peak hours, while in other cases airports are unable to handle an increase in the number of

aircrafts and their increasing size and capacities due to runway limitations. IATA's Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) estimates that between 1995 and 2010 more than US\$200 billion will have to be spent on airport infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific Region if it is to keep pace with the expected traffic growth. In cognizance of this, a massive round of public and private sector spending is currently in progress to cater to the expected growth in both passenger and cargo air traffic, and to alleviate problems of congestion on the ground.

6. Several massive new airport projects are already on the drawing board or under construction in Asia, including the new international gateway airports in Hong Kong, China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and here in Malaysia. Most of these new gateway airports are being planned for capacities of more than 40 million passengers a year, and will be able to accommodate the next generation of very large capacity aircraft. They will also feature the latest in hi-tech systems to move people, baggage and cargo, and they will be more environmentally sensitive than existing airports.

7. Malaysia's all-new Kuala Lumpur International Airport, now being constructed on fast track basis at Sepang 50 kilometres South of Kuala Lumpur, is designed to be among the best in the world, and is scheduled for completion less than 18 months from now in early 1998. This new airport will serve the nation as a whole and the very densely populated Kuala Lumpur and the Kelang Valley area in particular where a whole new city and modern industrial centre will be located. It will also provide Malaysia with a state-of-the-art gateway hub airport, which, with its four runways and four satellites, should, when completed be able to handle more than 40 million passengers per year.

8. Apart from the high profile international airports, upgrading and redevelopment works are in progress at many regional and hub airports throughout the region. Almost every Asian nation is in the process of developing its airport infrastructure. China alone has plans to upgrade and modernise 140 existing airports and to build several new provincial airports during the coming decades. All these will require the installation of state-of-the-art equipment and facilities if they are to meet the demands of users.

9. In the air there is the problem of traffic management systems, which can also contribute to congestion. Bottlenecks in airways over remote areas and oceans, as well as inadequate approach radar systems at some airports can cause inconvenient delays - and can add substantially to airline fuel bills. New satellite-based air navigation and traffic management systems are however already changing all this. Communication, navigation and surveillance air traffic management (CNS-ATM) systems are currently being tested over the South Pacific and it will not be long before the aviation world reaps the full benefits of these latest systems.

10. The advent CNS-ATM systems will allow many Asian nations with large land masses such as the nations of the Indian subcontinent, China, Mongolia, the Central Independent States (CIS) and the Russian Far East, to leapfrog straight into the new technology and at a fraction of the price of having to install conventional land-based networks of beacons and radar stations and VHF radio stations.

11. The staging of Airportex '96 is at a most opportune time in the light of major developments in airport construction and upgrading particularly in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the rapid strides being made in areas like air traffic and airspace management systems and technology. Airportex'96 also affords an excellent opportunity for industry professionals and experts to meet and exchange views, ideas and share their experiences. Finally I wish you all a successful exhibition, and may you enjoy your stay in Langkawi, the isles of many legends.

12. On this note I have great pleasure in declaring open this Airportex 1996.

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FILE NAME: SP2507  
REF: SMA250796