



Human feel, closer field are big attractions

UNIQUE: French air force chief gives big thumbs up to event

THE Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition (Lima '11) may be smaller than other air shows, but French air force chief Jean-Paul Palomeros finds it friendlier and unique.

"The aim here is different, thus, Lima has a more human feel to it as the airfield is closer and people can mix with the crews better compared with other venues that are separated and far apart.

"I find Lima unique and interesting.

"The location is also excellent for an air show, with a great viewing area, nice background and superb flying area, thus, making the whole experience better," he said during his first visit to Lima '11.

Palomeros said Lima's uniqueness and importance were factors that led France to send its top fighter jet, Dassault Aviation's Rafale, to Lima '11.

He said France felt that it was the right venue to showcase the uniqueness of the twin-engine delta-wing multi-role combat aircraft (MRCA) to Malaysians.

This is the first time the Rafale is in Malaysia.

The jet is on show daily, wowing crowds with death-defying stunts.

Palomeros said both pilots had flown the Rafale as part of the

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's military intervention in Libya this year.

The jet had proven its capabilities by clocking more than 7,000 hours during operations there.

"The French navy and air force dispatched the same Rafale for the operation and we became the only country to deploy the same type of aircraft from both military branches during that operation."

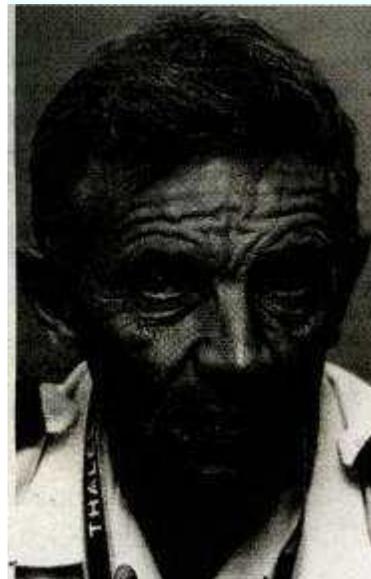
He added that the Rafale was also involved in the first strike on Libya with the aircraft flying for eight hours for that mission from France.

Palomeros said Malaysia and France had always had a good relationship, as shown by the Malaysian government buying the Eurocopter EC-725 helicopter to replace the ageing Sikorsky S-61A-4 Nuri.

"What we are offering to the Malaysian government with Rafale is not just a simple business transaction. We are offering a smart partnership between two countries and both air forces.

"We will make available the experience we learnt from operating the Rafale in Libya to the Royal Malaysian Air Force."

The Malaysian military and government are evaluating the Rafale for its MRCA.



French air force chief Jean-Paul Palomeros said Lima '11 is the perfect event to showcase the Rafale jet fighter to Malaysians