

We're not in the arms race

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From FARUSH KHAN

LONDON, Wed. — Malaysia has no intention of joining the arms race although it has agreed to buy British weapons, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last night.

Speaking on British television, the Prime Minister said the purchase was to replace old weapons.

"This is why we are buying weapons from Britain," he said in an interview on the *News at Ten* programme of the Independent Television Network after signing a Memorandum of Understanding with British Premier Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street.

Under the memorandum, Malaysia will buy about £1 billion (M\$4.6 billion) worth of defence equipment, including Tornado aircraft, radar systems and a submarine over a period of five to 10 years.

Asked to comment on Malaysia's tough drug laws, Dr Mahathir told British

viewers the death penalty had led to a decrease in the drug trade and deterred traffickers from using Malaysia as their base.

Asked for his opinion on Canadian athlete Ben Johnson's disqualification from the Olympics for taking a banned drug, he said the incident was minor compared to the destruction of youths through drug addiction.

Payment in kind

"I am more worried about young people whose lives have been destroyed by traffickers.

"These young people are more important and they are found all over the world."

He said the runner probably took the drug only to win the race.

Meanwhile, it is learnt the Memorandum of Understanding involves the purchase of:

- Tornado interdictor-strike aircraft;
- anti-aircraft missile batteries;
 - a £100 million (M\$460 million) communication package;
 - air defence radars;
 - howitzers and 105-mm guns;
 - a reconditioned Oberon-class submarine; and
 - ground-to-air missile launchers.

It is learnt that payment will be by supply of crude oil and other commodities, including gas, palm oil, rubber, tin and cocoa.

In Kuala Lumpur, Royal Malaysian Air Force chief Lt-Jen Datuk Seri Mohamed Ngah indicated the Tornados were for the latest fighter squadron of the force.

He said the RMAF had set up a team to select officers and men for the squadron.