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RMAF may buy Su-27 fighters, Mi-17 copters

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Royal Malaysian Air Force is considering procuring Russian-made Sukhoi Su-27 Flanker fighter jets and Mi-17 transport helicopters.

However, a decision would only be made after a technical team had evaluated the aircraft.

Defence Minister Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha said today the jets and the helicopters would be purchased if they suited the RMAF's requirements, subject to the availability of funds.

He said this after launching the Malaysian Defence Industry Council at Renaissance Hotel in Jalan Sultan Ismail.

Last week, Abang Abu Bakar accompanied Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on a tour of the Sukhoi Design Bureau military aircraft plant at Komsomsk-na-Amur, and the Ulan Ade Aviation Plant in the far eastern Russian republics of Khabarovsk and Buryatia.

At Komsomsk, they were treated to an aerial display of the Su-27 Flanker while at Ulan Ade they witnessed the capabilities of a Mi-17I Hip helicopter and Su-25 ground attack and trainer aircraft.

Currently, the RMAF operates 17 MiG-29N Fulcrum fighter jets purchased from Russia's Mikoyan-Gurevich Design Bureau in 1995, while the Fire and Rescue Department has two Mi-17s which were bought from the Kazan helicopter plant last year.

India, Vietnam, North Korea and China also have the Flanker while the Hip is widely used in the continent.

Meanwhile, Abang Abu Bakar denied reports that the ministry was consulting the MiG Design Bureau on the purchase of 18 more MiG-29s. He also denied a report that the ministry had received two Mi-17 helicopters.

Both reports were carried by the Air Forces Monthly, a United Kingdom-based monthly magazine, in its July edition.

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