

# Najib: No decision yet on Sukhoi fighter offer

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PEKAN, Fri. Although the Malaysian Government has received offers from Russia to purchase its Sukhoi SU-30MK multirole combat aircraft, there has yet to be any decision on the matter.

Furthermore, the team of Royal Malaysian Air Force personnel sent to Russia to test the aircraft last month have yet to complete their mission.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Russian Government had offered to the Malaysian Government the combat aircraft which are the same as the ones ordered by the Indian Government.

"However, we have not made any decision on this as the purchase of modern, sophisticated and high capability aircraft such as the Sukhoi-SU30MK needs quite some time to be reviewed and it must be done on all aspects.

"We cannot solely concentrate on the commercial offer which was made by the Russian Government but we have to look at the actual capability of the aircraft, especially its combat capabilities.

"Besides this, we need some time to go through and ascertain the real performance of the aircraft besides identifying the technology transfer which is needed for the interest of our country.

"Due to this I do not expect any decision to be made on this matter before or during

the upcoming Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) Exhibition 2001 which will be held next month."

He, however, said the purchase of other aircraft such as helicopters, might be made during the LIMA exhibition, but it would not involve the multirole combat aircraft.

Najib said this when asked on a *Business Times* report that Malaysia's proposal to buy a few of the Russian fighter aircraft Sukhoi-SU30MK, worth some US\$35 million (RM133 million) each, which was shelved four years ago due to the Asian financial crisis, is expected to be revived.

Speaking after meeting the fishermen's wives at Kuala Pahang here today, Najib said the Government was still assessing the various proposals that Malaysia has received from the Russian government over the past few years.

"Anything of this nature is quite a major undertaking as we have to look at the systemic approach to maintaining the aircraft on a long-term basis."

On his visit to Russia with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad from Sept 12 to 16, Najib said the Malaysian delegation would also be meeting the Russian Government as to listen to their proposal over this matter. "We have our plans and the modernisation of the Armed Forces will be done according to our capabilities."