

07 SEP 2001

Najib-Combat

NO DECISION YET TO BUY RUSSIAN COMBAT AIRCRAFT, SAYS NAJIB

PEKAN, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- There is no decision yet on whether Malaysia will acquire the Russian-made multi-role combat aircraft, the Sukhoi SU-30MK, costing RM133 million each.

The Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the government needed more time to evaluate the high-performance aircraft from all aspects before making a decision.

He confirmed that Russia offered to sell Malaysia a fleet of Sukhoi SU-30MKs, the same type which the Indian air force had also ordered.

"The offer needs studying not only from the commercial aspect but also from the aircraft's combat capability," Najib told reporters here.

He was commenting on a Business Times newspaper report today suggesting that interest in the purchase of the Sukhoi SU-30MKs, deferred for the past four years because of the 1997 economic crisis, was rekindled with the revived economy.

A Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) team sent to Russia was still evaluating the aircraft, Najib said.

Before striking any deal for the purchase of the aircraft, the RMAF would also have to identify areas for possible technology transfer crucial for the Malaysian armed forces.

Najib however did not expect any decision on the Russian offer to be forthcoming until after the hosting of the 2001 Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) exhibition next month.

"Perhaps at a time after LIMA we may be able to make a final decision on the matter," he said.

Najib, who will be accompanying Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the Prime Minister's visit to Russia next week, said he looked forward to getting details on the Sukhoi SU-30MKs offer when in Moscow.

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