

Malaysia confirms Polish tank purchase

■ By MERGAWATI ZULFAKAR

WARSAW: Malaysia yesterday confirmed that it will buy the PT91 main battle tank from Poland.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in announcing this, however, said details including the quantity, price and conditions would have to be worked out by the two governments.

Asked whether there would be counter-trade or transfer of technology over the purchase, he said there would be various "offset arrangements" in order to benefit both sides.

"We are interested on the export of palm oil and may be part payment in kind rather than cash.

"There will be other discussions on technology transfer and manufacturing in Malaysia. These are details that will have to be worked out by officials," he said at the end of his three-day official visit to Poland.

Malaysia and Poland have been in discussions on possible purchase of military weapons from Warsaw since

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Dr M: Decision was based on merits

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1993 but because of the economic crisis, the plans had to be shelved.

During the Prime Minister's visit here, the Polish Government staged an elaborate demonstration of the PT91 for the Malaysian delegation at the Tad&z Kosciuszko Warsaw Armoured Brigade camp in Wcsola, about 30 minutes' drive from here.

The PT91 is a main battle tank used in combat and it is an upgraded version of the Russian built T72.

The Malaysian army conducted an extensive evaluation of the vehicle over the past three years to see the adaptability of the tank in local conditions.

Malaysia has been looking for main battle tanks to equip its armoured regiment, which currently operates the British-made Alvis Scorpion light tank as well as several makes of

armoured personnel carriers.

Dr Mahathir also spent a day in Gdansk, some 350km from here, on Friday where the Polish had put up an impressive demonstration of naval airwing including its combat search and rescue capabilities.

Asked whether there was pressure by the Polish government to purchase the PT91, Dr Mahathir replied: "I don't think there was any pressure. We have evaluated the weapons systems of many countries.

"We know the relative merits of each and we have decided on main battle tanks from Poland because of the merits."

On his visits to Russia, Germany and Poland, the Prime Minister described them as very successful, adding that the Malaysian Government had made good contact with these countries.

Dr Mahathir returns home today.