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Najib-Tanks

BATTLE TANKS WILL NOT DAMAGE ROADS, ASSURES NAJIB

KAJANG, April 1 (Bernama) -- Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today assured the public that the use of main battle tanks would not cause damage to roads in the country.

He said the 45-tonne PT-91 main battle tank, Poland's version of the Russian T-72, would not damage the roads as it will be transported on trailers for mobility.

"We have bought low-loaders (trailers). Apart from that, the tanks would be fitted with rubber tracks," he said after performing the ground-breaking ceremony for the Defence Science and Technology Research Institute (IPSTP) in Semenyih near here.

The rubber tracks may be installed on the PT-91 tanks by local firms which had developed the technology. Such tracks have been used by the army's tracked vehicles like the Scorpion light tanks and Stormer armoured personnel carriers.

In the past, plans to use heavy battle tanks came under public criticism as it was feared that local roads and geological structures may not be able to withstand the tanks' massive weight.

Najib said he expected Malaysia to have a regiment of PT-91 tanks, to be purchased from Poland as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his recent visit to the country.

A tank regiment has some 50 battle tanks.

On the IPSTP, Najib hoped it would catalyse the local defence technologies which would in turn enhance Malaysia's rapidly developing defence industries.

The first phase of the IPSTP, developed at the cost of RM26 million, is due for completion July next year.

-- BERNAMA

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