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Najib-Sukhoi

MALAYSIA HAS YET TO DECIDE ON SUKHOI JETFIGHTERS, SAYS NAJIB

PETALING JAYA, April 22 (Bernama) -- The government has not made any decision on the proposal to buy the Russian-made Sukhoi Su-30 jetfighters, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today.

He said the matter was still in the "proposal acceptance process" from the product manufacturer in Russia.

"We have not made any decision. There are people who probably jumped the gun," he told reporters when asked about a report in an Indian daily, The Hindu, which stated that Malaysia would buy the Sukhoi jetfighters produced jointly by Russia and India. He had earlier opened the Military Medicine Conference here.

Najib said that should Malaysia decide to buy the multi-purpose jetfighter, the government would determine the technical aspects suitable for the country's defence needs.

The Sukhoi jetfighters are among those said to be considered by Malaysia for the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) as part of the ongoing modernisation process for the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Najib were in Russia last month to witness a demonstration of the aircraft's capabilities. China is among the countries in Asia to use the Sukhoi while India had made orders for the aircraft.

Replying to another question, Najib said that to a certain extent Malaysia had the capability to face the threat of chemical and biological weapons. However, he said the country's capability to face such threats needed to be upgraded.

"In such cases, it is difficult for any country to have capabilities in every aspect because it is a new field and needs substantial budget," he said.

Najib said Malaysia could seek assistance from certain countries should it face such a threat.

He was also asked on the statement by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong that there were Malaysian newspapers that deliberately created problems in Malaysia-Singapore relations by publishing news that could affect bilateral relations.

Najib said issues such as the land reclamation works by Singapore certainly attracted the attention of Malaysians and the media could not avoid from making comments on the matter.

"It's very difficult for us, including the media in Malaysia, not to make comments or talk about matters concerning Singapore-Malaysia relations," he said.

Najib said Malaysia had made a general statement on the matter and was now preparing scientific proof on the effects of the land reclamation works as requested by Singapore.

"It appears that they want concrete proof before making any response," Najib added.

-- BERNAMA

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