

Dr M wants MiG-29s jets upgraded  
Malaysiakini.com  
Disember 9, 2010

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad is in favour of upgrading Malaysia's fleet of MiG-29s - the Russian-built fighter jets - instead of buying new aircraft.

He pointed out that India, which is embarking on a programme to modernise its fighters, has opted to upgrade the country's fleet of 67 MiG-29s.

mikoyan mig 091205The upgraded multi-role fighters can remain in service for another 10 to 15 years.

"There was talk before of replacing the MiG-29 with other aircraft. I wonder whether there is a threat of war currently. If there is none, then if necessary only, we should upgrade what we have," said Mahathir in a posting in his Che Det blog.

India may also be upgrading its newer fleet of Sukhoi-30 jets. Malaysia too has 18 Sukhoi-30s, bought in 2003 which included the deal to train a Malaysian astronaut to go to the International Space Station on a Russian rocket.

"Malaysia has been working with India on the modification to the Russian-built aircraft. Maybe we should find out what the upgrading of the Sukhoi Su-30 and the MiG-29 is all about," said Mahathir about New Delhi's plan.

MiG-29s to be mothballed

Defence Minister Zahid Ahmad Hamidi had earlier said that Malaysia would be mothballing its fleet of 14 MiG-29s which it bought in the 1993. He, however, did not say what will be replacing the aging fighters.

Nevertheless, the ministry is looking to France, United States, Sweden and Britain for its new fleet of fighter jets.

However, the plan to replace the MiG-29s has been delayed by the economic downturn.

According to Zahid, it was difficult and costly to maintain some old components and systems for the MiG jets.

"The weaponry for the jets has reached the end of its lifespan and extending the lifespan would be costly and not be viable," he told Parliament last year.

However, in March the government said it would continue to operate 10 of its 16 MiG-29s until 2015, reversing plans to decommission them by the end of this year.

