

**Dr M wants regional pact to check arms race**  
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today proposed that Asean draw up an accord to prevent an arms race among its members which he said would also help reduce their rising weapons expenditure.

He said an arms race should never take place, more so at a time when there was much apprehension about the world economic situation.

"If we do not want an arms race, Asean member countries must agree not to enhance their (military) capabilities. Then, we can reduce (purchase of weapons).

"However, if we (Malaysia) are the only ones to reduce our (military) capabilities while the others continue to enhance theirs, we may be made the target," he told reporters after watching an air show in conjunction with the 2009 Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima 2009) exhibition which opened today.

Replying to a question, Mahathir said he felt that weapons expenditure was rising and many countries could not afford to spend much, and that whatever was spent would have no returns unless there was war.

**Thumbs up for local UAVs**

Mahathir, whose idea it was to have the Lima exhibition, said local companies had undergone tremendous improvement in terms of technological advancement over the years.

"I am happy that we are able to hold the Lima exhibition this year despite the uncertain world economic situation, where participation is not as in previous years but local companies are seen to be so advanced in various fields including electronic, and this is an achievement we can be proud of," he said.

Thirty-seven per cent of the 325 exhibitors at this year's Lima exhibition are local companies, with National Aerospace & Defence Industries Sdn Bhd the biggest local exhibitor.

On unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), Mahathir said local companies had the capability to manufacture these products on par with international manufacturers and they were of export quality.

Yesterday, Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the use of UAVs was a cost-effective measure and a suitable platform to undertake maritime surveillance.

Several local companies, including Sapura and Composite Technology Research Malaysia (CTRM), had manufactured and tested UAVs.

- *Bernama*

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