

Najib: We need to spend on military hardware

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PEKAN: Spending on new military hardware is not an extravagance but part of the country's balanced development, the deputy prime minister said.

Refuting negative perceptions of the armed forces' latest acquisitions, Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is also defence minister, said the purchases were carefully planned and based on the country's defence needs.

"The continuing modernisation of our armed forces is a necessity because of the changes around us," he said at the opening of the armed forces' career exposition held in conjunction with Pekan Fest 2007 here yesterday.

"We cannot afford to have an outdated armed forces because they would not be able to defend the country then."

Criticisms against the country's latest military spending have targeted the purchases of multi-million ringgit Sukhoi SU-30MKM jet fighters from Russia and Scorpene submarines from France.

Najib said all the hard work to develop the country would come to naught if it were vulnerable.

"We cannot wait to build our forces only when we are threatened. By then, it would be too late."

He said the sceptics of the armed forces' modernisation should learn from history, particularly the demise of the Malacca Sultanate which was defeated by a Portuguese force of only three warships.

Najib also announced that two of the Sukhoi jet fighters and six PT-91 main battle tanks bought from Poland would be showcased at the 50th Merdeka Day celebrations.

On the career exposition, the 10th since its inception in 2002,



Datuk Seri Najib Razak checking out a remote-controlled bomb disposal robot at the armed forces' career exposition in Pekan yesterday.

Najib said with better salary schemes and career advancement opportunities as well as advanced training on new military technologies and doctrines, prospects have never been better in the army.

On Proton's financial losses and the collapse in talks on equity partnership with Germany's Volkswa-

gen AG, Najib said he was confident the management of the national carmaker would find a way to turn the company around.

Ruling out the possibility of Proton being sold off to any foreign entity, he said the government was optimistic Proton could still find a strategic partner to strengthen its

position.

"We cannot afford to let Proton continue to suffer losses as its survival is important to the country."

Proton, on Thursday, announced that it posted a net loss of RM913,000 in the quarter to March 31, its fourth straight quarterly loss.