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Dr M: Let's not start an arms race

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia should not start an "arms race" with Singapore, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said this when asked for his views on Singapore's plan to exhibit two of its F-16 fighters at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) 2009 exhibition in December.

Online military news portal KL Security Review recently reported, citing an unnamed source, that the Malaysian cabinet had approved the participation of Singapore's F-16s.

If the plan materialised, it would be the first time ever that Singapore displayed the F-16s at LIMA. Normally, the Malaysian government is cautious about allowing foreign military assets on its soil, the portal said.

"It's Singapore's right to exhibit its defence capability. In a way, we get to know to what extent Singapore can defend itself.

"(But) I hope you will not start an arms race, where if it has an F-16, then we must have an F-18 and so on. It's a waste of money. We're not fighting, we're not going to war with Singapore," Dr Mahathir said at a press conference here yesterday after delivering a speech at the Corporate Governance Summit.