

**Defence Diplomacy Between Malaysia-Singapore Increasing, Says Ahmad Zahid
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SINGAPORE, Feb 14 (Bernama) -- Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the participation of "Smokey Bandits" team from the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) at the 2012 Singapore Airshow is a manifestation of an increase in defence diplomacy between Singapore and Malaysia.

He said it was the first time the team was invited to show off their abilities in the air show following a request by his Singaporean counterpart, Dr Ng Eng Hen during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA) last year.

"At 2011 LIMA, Singapore sent their warships, aircraft and helicopters. This commitment demonstrates the cooperation and respect between the two neighbouring countries," he told Malaysian journalists at a ceremony to commemorate the late Lt. Ahmad Saidi who died in the Bukit Candu battle, here.

Ahmad Zahid, who is in Singapore for the Singapore Airshow, said at the moment, the number of delegates from Malaysia participating in the air show here, was also quite large.

He said 25 senior officers from the Armed Forces of the various services and 55 other officials would visit daily and this was to respond to a large group from Singapore during LIMA last year.

Ahmad Zahid hoped that the cooperation and diplomacy between the two neighbouring countries would be sustained.

Meanwhile, in a statement, the Singapore Ministry of Defence said Singapore and Malaysia reaffirmed the warm and long-standing defence ties between the two neighbouring countries, and the good cooperation between the Singapore Armed Forces and the Malaysian Armed Forces at a meeting between Ahmad Zahid and his counterpart Dr Ng.

It said Ahmad Zahid, who attended the Singapore Airshow 2012, called on Dr Ng this afternoon at the Changi Exhibition Centre.

Dr Ng and Ahmad Zahid also viewed the Republic of Singapore Air Force's F-15SG and the Royal Malaysian Air Force's MiG-29N, which took part in the aerial display earlier.

The Ministers also interacted with pilots from both Air Forces.

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