KUALA LUMPUR: The Armed Forces will use the RM400mil increase in allocation in the 2003 Budget to procure, among others, armoured tanks and fighter jets to beef up its weaponry system.

This allocation would allow for the continued modernisation of the Armed Forces, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak told reporters after launching Utusan Malaysia "Gaya Tentera" pullout at the Sungai Besi base, here yesterday.

He said an armoured tank regiment and at least two-fighter jet squadrons would be set up upon the purchase of the PT91 "Twardy" tanks from Poland and the Multi Role Combat Aircraft.

The decision on the purchase would be made after negotiations between the government and the supplier.

Payment for the new weaponry system would be spread over several years so as not to affect government spending in other sectors.

The Defence Ministry was satisfied with the RM400mil increase in allocation in Budget 2003.

Najib refuted claims by PAS vice-president Datuk Mustafa Ali that the 2003 Budget was a move to fish for votes for the next general election.

"This is not an election gimmick to garner support but a decision based on the government's responsibility towards low-income earners so that they too may benefit from the country's development," said Najib, who is also an Umno vice-president.

He said the country's wealth needed fair distribution to reduce the income disparity among the high, medium and low-income earners.

Bernama

ARMY STYLE ... Najib holding a reproduction of the pullout 'Gaya Tentera' during its launch at the Sungai Besi Army Camp in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.