

NO REVIVAL OF DEFENCE PACT

THE current emphasis on the five-power defence pact is to upgrade the skills of Malaysian armed forces through joint training with Australia and New Zealand, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said there was no real "revival of the pact, created after the withdrawal of British forces from East of Suez. The two other members of the pact are Britain and Singapore.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia thought the best way of upgrading the skills of its armed forces was through joint venture with the armies from outside the country.

He pointed out that Malaysia had carried out bilateral exercises earlier with

the forces of Indonesia and Thailand.

Asked whether Malaysian forces would hold joint exercises with Singapore, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there was a difference in approach between the two countries. While Malaysia, with its long land and sea border, concentrated on ground forces, Singapore put emphasis on mechanised forces, particularly the air force.

"I don't see any need for them to train together," he added.

Dr Mahathir also denied reports that Kampuchean developments were the reason for Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn to assume the Defence portfolio in last month's Cabinet reshuffle.