

PM: Steer clear of politics

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. —
The Prime Minister warned army officers to limit their political sympathies to the right to vote, and said any act that would leave the country vulnerable to its enemies was a treasonable offence.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said at the Defence Ministry today that "as Government officers," military personnel were barked from politics but possessed democratic rights, including the right to support Opposition parties.

"But if in those sympathies we commit certain acts which conflict with the *Interests of the nation*, for example in na-

tional security, to the point of weakening the country... then we would not be sympathising anymore but committing treason against our own country."

He cited a recent example of an invited religious preacher whose sermon denounced the jungle campaigns against communist insurgents as un-Islamic and called on the rank and file to disobey combat orders.

The preacher asserted that Malaysian troops "were not really Islamic because they did not pray in the jungle," he said.

"It would not be wrong to call those who spread these teachings traitors. While we

live in a country of religious freedom, they seek victory for those who will suppress (this freedom)."

The Prime Minister described the freedom of worship as one of the most precious liberties in the country.

He said any move to doubt the faith of fighting men would weaken troop morale.

He said support for whatever political party had to be moderate.

"If we reach the stage of taunting (the armed forces) to stop the war to defend the country, then action must be taken."

He was speaking at the clos-

ing of a seminar for religious teachers.

He urged them to perform their expected duties to enhance the moral strength of the Armed Forces.

The Armed Forces' religious teachers could "weaken or strengthen" the spirit of fighting troops and "should not enter the service only for the pay without thinking of the country and religion."

Those teachers had "an important duty to those who risk their lives in the defence of the country," he said.