

# GOVT MEN TOLD: DON'T BECOME TRAITORS

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned Government officers that if their political actions jeopardised the country's security they would be branded as traitors.

The Prime Minister said that although government officers were not allowed to be active in politics they were not prevented from sympathising with political parties, including that of the opposition.

"This is not a problem. In fact, in a country which practises democracy this is our right and they can vote for the party of their choice," he said at the closing of a two-day seminar for armed forces religious teachers at the Defence Ministry here.

"But if, their sympathies turned into actions which affect the country's security,

weaken and paralyse it and make it an easy prey for its enemies, then they are not mere political sympathisers but are traitors," he said.

"There is a limit to such sympathies," he said.

Dr Mahathir also stressed that freedom of worship practised in the country must be defended.

He said there were countries which did not allow their people to practise their respective religions and beliefs.

"There is no such restrictions in this country and as such it is important that we protect religious freedom and defend it.

"That is why we have the army, not only to defend the country from its enemies or merely to protect a piece of our land but also the free-

dom of worship," he said.

Dr Mahathir cited an example where an outsider who was invited to give a talk at an armed forces seminar incited the soldiers fighting in the jungle to disobey their officers.

The Prime Minister said that the lecturer concerned alleged that the soldiers were not Muslims because they had no time to perform their prayers while fighting the communists in the jungles.

Dr Mahathir said that this would not only weaken their spirit but also their resilience to fight the enemy.

He added that their unwillingness to fight could lead the country to fall into the hands of the communists.

"It would not be wrong for me to call such people traitors because they would

not only be betraying the country and the people but also the religion. They are living in a country in which they are free to preach and Yet are helping others to gain control of the country and oppress us," he said.

He warned that actions would be taken against those who incite members of the armed forces from carrying out their responsibilities.

In this context, he stressed that religious teachers played an important role in instilling the spirit of patriotism in the soldiers.

As people well-versed in the religion, they could provide the necessary spiritual enrichment to them apart from helping to boost their morale.

Dr Mahathir also said that an armed forces religious corp would be set up

soon to enable these religious teachers to play a more effective role.

He added that it was time that such an organised body be set up to carry out religious work and provide the necessary religious leadership.

"There is no other motive except to plan the best ways on how we could instil spiritual enrichment to the members of the armed forces when discharging their duties," he said.

He said it was also to give the religious teachers a sense of belonging to the armed forces and not consider themselves as a separate entity.

A well disciplined and organised armed forces with a deep understanding of religion, would be of great benefit to the country, he said.