

# A strong defence is a must — Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Malaysia needs an effective defence and security system to avoid the defeat, suffering and destruction experienced by South Vietnam and Kampuchea, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The system, to safeguard the nation and people, must be able to repel any form of internal and external threats.

For any security system to be effective, it must be managed by people equipped with the necessary skills.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Defence Minister, called on staff officers of the armed forces to rea-

lise that acquiring management skills was as good as having sophisticated weapons in building a solid defence system.

A haphazard defence arrangement will only result in frustration, misery and destruction.

"We have seen what has become of South Vietnam and Kampuchea where a decline in de-

fence had resulted in misery, loss of rights and freedom, confiscation of property and the destruction of industries."

The Prime Minister was speaking at a diploma presenting ceremony for 101 staff officers having the ranks of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel who completed their 11-month course at the Armed Forces Staff

College.

Among the officers, 19 were from the United States, Australia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand and Britain.

He said: "To escape from the misery, the Vietnamese and Kampuchians risk their lives to get away to other countries.

"We Malaysians too may experience a fate similar to that of thousands of Vietnamese refugees who have landed on our shores if we are careless or if we don't have a solid defence system."

## Arms race

This is the only way peace can be guaranteed so that the rakyat will be able to live freely and achieve progress.

"Our defence strategy must be capable of upholding a broad security concept that encompasses the overall aspects of military strength, a powerful economy, political stability, a good administrative machinery, psychological resilience and a unified people."

The strategy should be based upon the wish to avoid war and to guarantee a peaceful co-existence among neighbouring countries.

Massive expenditure and investment are required in building a modern defence system.

"We could easily get caught up in the arms race which puts so much emphasis on technological advances that are becoming ever more costly.

"As a developing nation we cannot afford to acquire a complete, state of the art weapons and equipment because of the price factor and the fact that more often than not these weapons would have to be replaced with more sophisticated ones.

"We should instead emphasise on the right choice of weapons and equipment to suit our