

PM: We'll send troops if asked

By Paul Gabriel

ALOR STAR, Fri. — Malaysia will only send its troops to Saudi Arabia to help repulse a possible Iraqi attack if there is "imminent danger" to Mecca and Medina, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said there appeared to be no such danger now to the two cities, which are on the other side of the Arabian peninsula and not along the border with Kuwait and Iraq.

"As long as Mecca and Medina are safe, we will not do more than what the United Nations demands

(of us). We feel it is better for the UN to co-ordinate peacekeeping efforts," he said.

"But if the UN asks for help, we will despatch our troops (to Saudi Arabia), just like we did for Congo, Namibia and for the Iran-Iraq War," he said when launching the Rela Service Month at Sekolah Menengah Sri Mahawangsa in Jitra.

Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet would discuss the request for help conveyed by a special envoy of King Fahd last week.

The Prime Minister said that Malaysia did not wish to take sides in the Gulf crisis, but it un-

derstood Saudi Arabia's plight, "the oressure" faced by the Government and people, and why they sought US assistance.

He said that many wealthy nations could not defend themselves in a crisis and became targets because of this.

"Even Saudi Arabia has had to seek help. We are very sad that they had to ask for assistance from a non-Islamic country.

"By right, the United Nations should have defended Saudi Arabia . . . but perhaps it could not move fast enough because it had to get the approval of member countries," Dr Mahathir said.