

Dr M: If Holy cities threatened . . .

We'll help defend Mecca, Medina

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By K. Bala

JITRA, Fri. — Malaysia will send troops as requested by Saudi Arabia if the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are in imminent danger, but will otherwise abide by the decisions of the United Nations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

At the moment the cities are under no threat as they are some 1,800km from the immediate area of danger, the Prime Minister said when launching Rela's national-level *Bulan Bakti* at Sekolah Menengah Sri Mahawangsa (See Also Page 3).

Dr Mahathir regretted the crisis in the Gulf where "a rich Muslim nation has been attacked by another rich and powerful Muslim country." Though he did not name the countries, he was referring to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the danger posed to Saudi Arabia,

Saudi Arabia, which was not in a position to defend itself, was forced to ask for help, he said, adding that it had no choice in deciding to whom it should turn to.

"It is very sad that the conflict is among Muslim nations. It is also sad that the aid came from non-Islamic countries (the United States and its allies).

"Though this is sad, Saudi Arabia cannot defend itself on its own.

"By right the UN should defend Saudi Arabia, but it cannot act without the consensus of the members."

He said Saudi Arabia had asked for help from other Muslim countries.

(Last week, Saudi Arabia's

King Fahd sent his special envoy Sheikh Abdul Azis to request for Malaysian troops. The request was conveyed to Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah, and the Cabinet was reported to have discussed the matter two days ago.)

Malaysia realised the threat to the Government and people of Saudi Arabia, and also the hardships faced by the Kuwaitis.

"We are prepared to give support if Mecca and Medina are threatened. If not, we will await the decision of the UN.

"If the UN agrees, we will send our troops to be part of the UN forces just like in the Congo, the Iran-Iraq conflict and Namibia."

Dr Mahathir hoped the Gulf conflict would be a lesson to Malaysians on the need for unity and stability.

On democracy, the Prime Minister said for the system to succeed there must be discipline.

This meant there could not be absolute freedom as the norms of morality and decency must be taken into account.

"Our democracy must be Malaysian and not *ala* American. We have to determine what is right for us.

"We are not ashamed to admit that there are some limits to democracy to prevent chaos and disorder in our multi-racial country."

Otherwise the people are free to do what they want, he said, adding that anyone including newspapers who transgressed these limits and threatened stability and security would be dealt with.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was on the threshold of being a developed country and would achieve the status as long as the people worked hard.

He said Malaysia was now being looked upon as a model by many Third World countries. Their officials are keen to visit and study not only Malaysia's economic development efforts but also its racial unity.

He said a 60-man team from Nigeria including six Ministers would visit Malaysia soon for this purpose.