

PM: Troops to be sent if holy cities threatened

By ANHJUDIN ATTAN

MALAYSIA may send its troops to the Gulf if the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are threatened. Under other circumstances, it will abide by the decision of the United Nations Security Council, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said by now the UN should have decided to send its peace-keeping force to defend Saudi Arabia from any possible Iraq offensive. "But the UN cannot act fast because it needs the approval of all member countries," he told some 10,000 officers from Rela, the county vigilante corp, when launching a "Bakti Month" in Alor Star yesterday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government will not send troops to Saudi Arabia unless the UN Security Council directs its members, including Malaysia, to do so.

"But if the holy cities come under threat, Malaysia is prepared to act," he said. But he noted that Iraq's offensive threat against its Arab neighbour is taking place some 1,800 km away from Mecca and Medina.

The Prime Minister said it is sad that Saudi Arabia had to turn to non-Islamic countries to defend the country. He also expressed regret that the UN is unable to decide quickly on sending its peace-keeping troops.

Malaysia, he recalled, had in the past responded to calls by the UN to send its troops to Congo, Iraq (during its conflict with Iran) and Namibia.

He told the people that the independence enjoyed by a country, no matter how rich, will always come under threat if its people are not willing to die for their nation.

Malaysia, he said, is fortunate because its people are willing not only to join the army and the police to ensure peace in the country but also to volunteer their services to Rela as a back-up unit. "A country with people who are not willing to volunteer to defend it will even-

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tually fall.”

Many rich nations, he added, have had to rely on mercenaries to fight their wars or defend their countries from military assaults. “These mercenaries are willing to fight as long as they still live to collect their dues. They are not prepared to die as people proud of their country would.”

Earlier, the Prime Minister said the democracy practised in the country is aimed at achieving peace and prosperity. “We do not need democracy that borders on insanity — the democracy practised in some countries in the

West that leads to industrial strikes, racial tension and crises or degradation of norms and societies.”

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia, through its own democratic principles, is now perceived as an “exemplary developing nation”.

Leaders from many developing countries have expressed wonder at the country’s rapid progress. A delegation from Nigeria, including some Cabinet ministers, have expressed interest to visit Malaysia to study the country’s strategies and policies, he said.