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KUALA LUMPUR, April 28, (Bernama) -- ⁹ ~~D~~ Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has told defence ministers from member countries of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) that Malaysia will continue to support the arrangement.

The prime minister agreed with the views of the ministers that the defence arrangement had contributed greatly to the peace and stability in the region, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir met the defence ministers at a tea reception at Carcosa Seri Negara here.

Datuk Seri Najib told reporters that the ministers also briefed Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir on the outcome of their meeting today.

FPDA, which was established 20 years ago, comprises Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia. -- more

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir in turn informed them of Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu's clarification on Japan's decision to send minesweepers to the Gulf, Datuk Seri Najib added.

The two prime ministers met here for the first time yesterday at the start of Encik Kaifu's three-day visit to Malaysia.

Japan has said its despatch of four minesweepers and two navy support vessels to the Gulf is to help clear the area.

The defence ministers, however, did not discuss the sending of the vessels by Japan at their meeting, Datuk Seri Najib said.

Malaysia has accepted Japan's request for its vessels to call at the Pulau Pinang port to replenish supplies like clean water.

The six vessels have left Japan and are expected to reach Pulau Pinang in two or three weeks en route to the Gulf. -- Bernama

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