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MAHATHIR SAYS NATIONAL SERVICE ONLY IF NO ALTERNATIVE

Mahathir-forces

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LANGKAWI, ~Aug 10 (Bernama) - - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government would introduce national **service** if the **shortage** of personnel in the armed forces could not be resolved through normal recruitment .

The move would be implemented only if there was no other way to overcome the problem, he added.

+If we cannot overcome **the problem**, we will have to introduce national 'service,+ he told reporters at the Langkawi International Airport here before returning to Kuala Lumpur after a four-day visit **here**.

If the armed forces was able to overcome the shortage through normal intake, the government would not implement national service, he said.

He **was commenting** on the statement by Chief of **Defence Forces Jen** Tan Sri Yaacob Mohamad Zain that the armed forces faced a shortage of manpower.

Jen Yaacob said **yesterday** that the three branches of the armed forces faced problems in **recruiting** new officers and other ranks-and the lack of response from the young people to take up a military career was cause for concern. -- more

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According to him, the armed forces was experiencing a shortfall of about 500 new recruits annually. The armed **forces planned** to recruit 6,000 men a year to replace about 4,000 who left and retired each year.

Asked if the government contemplated taking immediate measures to remedy the situation, Dr Mahathir said the government had yet to take any steps as the problem was a new phenomena.

It might be due to the wide job opportunities available in the country today, he added.

Reporters **also asked** him about the action taken by Indonesian government to suspend the sale of the Asian Wall Street Journal (**AWSJ**) and International Herald Tribune for publishing an **+unethical+** advertisement by an **international** courier company,. which depicted President Suharto and other Asian leaders, including Dr Mahathir.

'Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian government would consider taking similar action if the advertisement was carried here by the two newspapers. -- more

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He added, however, that he had not seen a similar advertisement published by the two newspapers sold in Malaysia as the advertisement might only be for the Indonesian market.

The advertise, inserted by DHL International, depicted President **Suharto**, **South** Korean President Roh Tae Woo, Singapore Prime Minister **Goh** Choh Tong and Dr Mahathir with a DHL employee.

Indonesian Information Minister Harmoko **criticised** the advertisement as **+totally unethical+** and insulting.

The suspension of the two newspapers would continue until DHL **apologised** to the Indonesian government, he added. -- Bernama

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