

PM: We will not pull out of Cambodia

By NIZAM ISA and HALIM WAHAB

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will not withdraw its peacekeeping forces from Cambodia, the Prime Minister said yesterday.

"We will stick to the UN's directive. We don't want to criticise what the other countries are doing," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He was asked to comment on Japan's decision to withdraw its police personnel to Phnom Penh following the killing of a

Japanese police inspector in an ambush in north-west Cambodia.

However, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia wanted its peacekeepers to be equipped with better weapons so that they could defend themselves.

"We have asked for our soldiers to be properly armed, including the use of bullet-proof vests," he said yesterday.

Asked about a proposal from Mr Son Sann, a leader of a small non-communist faction that the UN-sponsored election in Cambodia be postponed,

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Dr Mahathir said: "It does not change anything."

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Badawi said that Malaysia's personnel would continue to carry out their responsibilities in Cambodia.

He said that, at present, there was no request for the soldiers to be pulled out from Cambodia.

However, Abdullah said the UN should provide the peacekeepers with better equipment so that they could carry out their duties effectively.

"We don't want to be-

come like a policeman who is only armed with a baton and expected to control a terrorist group with machine-guns and hand grenade. We can't do that," he added.

Abdullah also said the UN should not postpone the elections in Cambodia because such a move would only benefit the Khmer Rouge which initiated violence to disrupt the elections.

"We can't wait; any postponement of the elections will mean the Khmer Rouge have won their struggle," he added.