
Malaysia will keep pledge on troops, says Dr M

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LANGKAWI, Mon. — Malaysia will fulfil its commitment to deploy peacekeepers to Somalia to help restore peace and order despite the rising tension in that country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysia would not retract its earlier decision to send troops to Somalia merely because of clashes between the Somalis and United Nations peacekeepers.

"Our decision will not change, we have given our commitment. We cannot tell the world that we can send our troops only when the situation is in order.

"We are sending our troops to restore peace and order in Somalia," he added.

Speaking at a Press conference after the opening of the RM28.3 million Langkawi district police headquarters in Kuah here, Dr Mahathir said: "We have committed (to send peacekeepers) and we will go."

However, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysian troops to be deployed in Somalia would be given the required preparation to face the tense situation.

"We will take the necessary steps to prepare our peacekeepers to face the situation in Somalia.

"It is a dangerous duty and our armed forces will provide our troops with the necessary training.

"The armed forces will decide on weapons or the necessary equipment for our troops."

Dr Mahathir was asked whether there would be a change in the Government's stand on the deployment of Malaysian peacekeeping forces in Somalia following outbreaks of clashes in Mogadishu.

On Saturday, 22 Pakistani troops were killed and 50 injured in clashes with the forces of Somali warlord General Mohamed Farah Aidid.

In a fresh firefight in Mogadishu today, at least two Somalis were shot dead by Pakistani UN troops after Somali gunmen attacked the Pakistani contingent base, a cameraman with Reuters Television said.

US troops were sent to the Pakistani base on Octo-

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ber 21 Road and took up sniper positions on the roofs of nearby buildings.

The Pakistan Government has demanded the United Nations begin an investigation and take punitive action against the attackers.

In Bonn, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Government said today it could not rule out withdrawing its troops from Somalia.

"I cannot rule anything out," Government spokesman Dieter Vogel told a regular news conference.

But the opposition Social Democrats (SPD) said they

would challenge the mission next week in Germany's highest court, arguing that it contravened constitutional limits on German military activity abroad.

In Ankara, the commander of UN forces in Somalia blamed the Aideed's forces for setting an ambush.

Turkish Lieutenant-General Cevik Bir told Anatolian in a telephone interview from Mogadishu that gunmen from Aideed's United Somalia Congress had fired on the Pakistanis.

He said all Mogadishu's warring factions had been informed in advance that the Pakistani unit would inspect a weapons depot in the

Somali capital on Saturday.

"Despite this, the Pakistani unit was surrounded from three sides on its return. Anti-tank weapons and rockets were fired at them from close range," Bir was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, in the United Nations, the Security Council has ordered UN troops in Somalia to go after those responsible for the killings.

Reuter reports that the resolution adopted unanimously in an emergency session yesterday calls for the arrest, prosecution and trial of gunmen and others responsible for "inciting such attacks" against the Pakistanis.

The resolution, at Pakistan's request, also asks nations to contribute "on an emergency basis" armoured personnel carriers, tanks and attack helicopters.

It requests Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to order a probe into the violence "with particular emphasis on the role of those factional leaders involved".

Pakistan's ambassador Jamsheed Marker said events in Somalia and elsewhere are "testimony to the murderous length to which these international thugs are prepared to go in order to maintain their regimes of greed and oppression".