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Mahathir-troops

MALAYSTA SENDING TROOPS TO SEEK ALLIES

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 25 (Bernama) -- Malaysia sends its troops abroad as peacekeepers on humanitarian grounds and also to seek allies in the event it comes under attack, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said that should Malaysia, which is undergoing intensive economic growth, be attacked, it would require the military support and assistance of other countries.

Therefore, he said, it was important for Malaysia to seek allies through the despatch of soldiers abroad, particularly to developing countries.

"If we are attacked, we will need allies, and if we do not have friends, then we will be overrun," he said when officiating at the "Gathering of Warriors With The Prime Minister" organised by the Ex-Servicemen's Association of Malaysia (PDBPM) at Stadium Negara here.

More than 15,000 ex-servicemen and their families thronged the stadium for the occasion which was also attended by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and the deputy minister, Datuk Wan Abu Bakar Wan Mohamed.

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Malaysia recently sent troops for peacekeeping missions under United Nations' auspices to Cambodia and Somalia. It has also offered to send soldiers to strife-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of an Islamic force, also under UN auspices.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had the mission of together saving the world from destruction.

"Therefore, at a time when we are enjoying peace we have to help countries which are facing conflicts, more so those countries whose people are of the same religion and status as ours," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the government would ensure that soldiers sent on such missions abroad would be equipped with adequate protective gear.

"We will take into account the plight of our soldiers at all times...it is not an easy decision for the government to make to send soldiers to other countries because the soldiers too have families," he said. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had limited capability to send troops abroad to protect suffering people, unlike superpowers such as the United States, Britain and France.

"Therefore, we have a big ambition, that is Vision 2020, to make Malaysia rich, a superpower...not for a life of luxury but to be respected by other countries, particularly developed countries," he said.

He said several quarters had tried to undermine Malaysia's effort to realise Vision 2020 because they feared that if Malaysia achieved its objective "they will be unable to stop us any longer".

Dr Mahathir said the spirit of making sacrifices for the country must be instilled in young people.

He said young people enjoyed all forms of luxury, owing to the intensive economic growth and, in the process, forgot their responsibility to come to the defence of the nation. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said many young people were keen on working in the public and private sectors which offered comfortable work atmosphere.

If they were unwilling to make sacrifices for the country, the nation would face destruction, he said.

On a suggestion by PBPM that a revolving fund be set up to help ex-servicemen engage in business, Dr Mahathir said the government would give positive consideration to the proposal.

The prime minister also launched a special edition of the armed forces magazine "Pahlawan".

Earlier, PBPM president Datuk Zainol Abidin Johari presented the "Wira Terpuji" special awards to Dr Mahathir, Najib and former PBPM president Jen (B) Tan Sri Hamid Bidin. -- Bernama

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