

PM: Malaysia must be strong and advanced to help the weak

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By Jeffrey Ramayah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Malaysia must strive to be a fully-developed and strong nation so that it will be better placed to help those who are victimised and harassed in other parts of the world, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This would also earn the nation the respect of other countries and help it withstand the pressures exerted by some world powers, the Prime Minister said.

He said although Malaysia was not as strong as the United States, Britain, France, Germany or Russia, it was able to play a key role in sending forces to join the United Nations peace-keeping missions in various parts of the world.

Dr Mahathir said this in his address to ex-servicemen and their families at a special get-together at the Stadium Negara here. The packed function was organised by the Malaysian Ex-

Servicemen's Association.

He said: "We are sending our forces to Bosnia-Herzegovina to help the Bosnians who are being tortured by the Serbs.

"The benefits of achieving independence will not be justified if we do not become a strong and powerful nation."

In order for Malaysia to be a respected nation, Malaysians, especially the younger generation, must be willing to make sacrifices for the country. They should be prepared to defend the country at all costs, he added.

He said Malaysia wanted to participate in peace-keeping missions such as that in Bosnia-Herzegovina because it had the responsibility to help the weak.

"We need to be friends with all countries because one day we may also be subjected to external threats.

"If this happens, we may need the help of others."

Dr Mahathir said the

members of the nation's defence forces had made tremendous sacrifices to enable the country to maintain its political and economic stability.

Dr Mahathir said: "Without their sacrifices, we will not be able to live in peace and harmony and enjoy the fruits of development.

"While we enjoy the benefits of peace and prosperity, we must not forget the sacrifices of these personnel who will continue to risk their lives and limbs for the people and nation."

He said he was pleased with the support given by the ex-servicemen to the Government, adding that no leader in the world could lead his country without the support of the people.

Malaysians must not forget the struggles and sacrifices of its defence forces.

Dr Mahathir stressed that the country must be defended by its own citizens. It will face destruction if it depends on help from other

countries.

"A country which cannot defend itself with its own people will eventually be destroyed," he said.

Since achieving independence in 1957 the Government has brought about tremendous development and this has resulted in the creation of plenty of lucrative job and business opportunities for the people.

"But it must be remembered that we also need a strong defence force to protect the country. Young Malaysians should emulate this spirit of sacrifice so that we can continue to live in peace and harmony."

He said the Malaysian soldiers to be sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina would be fully trained and equipped to protect themselves against attacks.

The Government is still waiting for the UN's stand on the offer to send troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).