

PM's advice to Malaysian soldiers

Do the nation

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SUNGAI PETANI, Sat. — Soldiers bound for Bosnia-Herzegovina have been told to live up to the good name and excellent service record of Malaysian peacekeepers who have served in other countries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed confidence today that they would strive to maintain the respectable image of the country carved by other Malaysian peacekeepers.

He said Malaysian soldiers sent on United Nations missions had always earned the praise of the world body for their excellent service.

Speaking to about 850 Malaysian troops bound for Bosnia-Herzegovina at the Third Armour headquarters here, Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian troops were aware of their task and the dangerous situation in the war-torn country.

Describing their duties as "a heavy task" he expressed confidence that the troops were ready to ride the challenges and obstacles in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Prime Minister also inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by the soldiers on United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor) duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina and presented the UN berets to five officers.

The first batch of 21 Malaysian troops left for Bosnia-Herzegovina on Sept 21 while the second, consisting of 183 soldiers, will leave on Thursday.

"We support the UN but we cannot just support without showing our commitment. So far our peacekeepers have performed an excellent job and have earned the recognition and praise of the UN."

Dr Mahathir said the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina was agonising, with the Serbs brutally attacking the Bosnian Muslims and non-Muslims to wipe them out from their own country.

"Even if Bosnia-Herzegovina is populated by the non-Muslims, our stand on this issue will not change," said Dr Mahathir, adding that Malaysia was appalled at the inhuman actions of the Serbs.

He hoped the families of Malaysian soldiers would be patient as the men faced challenges there.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia stood firm by its stand on the Bosnian issue although Britain did not share similar views.

Asked by reporters for his comment on British Prime Minister John Major's statement that Britain would continue to seek a political settlement instead of agreeing to Malaysia's stand, Dr Mahathir said: "We discussed ... he (Major) gave his views; we also have our own views."

"We are confident that our solution is more effective. That's our decision, never mind if he could not agree with it."

The Prime Minister had made clear Malaysia's stand to Major when the latter visited the country on Tuesday.

In his speech at a dinner on Tuesday in honour of the visiting British Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir appealed to Britain to reconsider its position on Bosnia-Herzegovina before the situation is forever cemented in history as the blackest catastrophe of the modern world.

Today, Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Najib Abdul Razak and high-ranking military officers.

Last night in Kota Baru, Najib said Malaysia's ability to send troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina should shame developed nations who have been "dragging their feet" on the issue.

He said this proved that at a time when the developed nations refused to accept the responsibilities to stop the atrocities in that coun-

try, Malaysia, a developing nation, showed that it did not compromise on its principles.

The sending of troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina should also make Pas realise that Umno, the backbone of the Government, believed in let-

ting its deeds do the talking.

Speaking at a dinner organised by the Ex-Servicemen's Association (Kelantan chapter) last night, he said his ministry would equip the soldiers as best as possible to face their challenges there.

Najib also rapped Pas leaders for merely being eloquent in speeches and *ceramah* about the atrocities faced by the Bosnians and the need to help them but not doing anything to assist their Muslim brothers there.

proud

leaving for Bosnia