

# PM: Nato will be asked to arm our soldiers

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Malaysia will request the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to arm Malaysian soldiers serving with the United Nations peacekeeping force in Bosnia-Herzegovina if Nato launches an attack on Serbian positions around Sarajevo.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that this would enable the 1,500 Malaysian soldiers to adequately defend themselves.

The Prime Minister said it was Nato's responsibility to equip Malaysian soldiers with suitable arms to defend themselves as their primary duty had hitherto been peace-keeping.

"We will ask Nato to supply weapons similar to those used by its forces, and we will make the request as soon as possible," he said.

He said that Malaysia would seek such assistance from other multi-national peacekeeping forces in the event Nato refused to accede to the request.

Speaking to reporters after attending a breaking-of-fast hosted by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi here, Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet decided to seek Nato's assistance with regard to the

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## Najib: Contingency plan drawn up

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arms at its weekly meeting today.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia did not intend to increase the number of soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina as the present strength had been approved by the United Nations Security Council.

"However, we don't believe there will be an air strike by Nato," added Dr Mahathir, when asked by newsmen if Malaysia would

send heavy armour to her peace-keeping forces.

To a question on whether Malaysian troops would continue to defend themselves if the war was prolonged, he said: "We have to consider whether we get assistance from those who have the capability.

"So far we have not been notified by Nato whether it wants to assist us or not."

Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and ambassadors from 13 Islamic coun-

tries, their wives and senior Government officials were present at tonight's function.

Earlier today, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak said the Cabinet, concerned over the safety of Malaysian troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, had directed the Defence Ministry to draw up a contingency plan should the Serbs retaliate against Nato air strikes to relieve the siege of Sarajevo.

The plan was being finalised and it would be carried out with the United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor), he said.

Speaking at his office at Wisma Pertahanan in Jalan Padang Tembak here, Najib said he briefed the Cabinet about the plan today.

He declined to provide details of the plan.

So far, two platoons of 65 soldiers have been deployed near Sarajevo airport about 20km from the city. All are

armed with assault rifles which will be no match against the Serbs' heavy artillery.

The Malaysian soldiers have been given the responsibility of monitoring the ceasefire between Bosnian and Serb forces.

Najib also said a small number of soldiers were in Konjic to prepare a base camp there.

Apart from Sarajevo, Malaysian soldiers will be stationed in Konjic, Visoko,

## in case of Serb attack

Jablanica and Tercin to protect relief supply lines around Sarajevo.

Najib said the soldiers were only lightly armed.

"We know they will be unable to protect themselves against heavy artillery bombardment by the Serbs. That is why we have prepared the plan and if need be, the Unprofor will assist in its implementation," he said.

He said he was confident that other military contin-

gents in Unprofor would protect each other in case of a Serb attack.

However, he said, the Serbs would be waging war against the international community if they were to attack any one of the UN military contingents.

"The implication is serious and I believe they will think twice before attacking UN forces," he added.

Meanwhile, the British Government is providing free logistics support to Ma-

laysian troops. The aid consists vehicles and equipment which arrived at the Port of Split last month.

Its consists of about 100 vehicles, including Land Rovers, general service trucks, forward recovery units, fuel, advanced logistical support trucks, ambulances and heavy engineering equipment.

The British Government also loaned 65 advanced tactical GEC-Marconi radio communication systems.