

PM: Malaysia can be developed nation if all remain dedicated

By Jeffrey Ramayah and M. Jeffri Razali

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The country will be able to achieve the status of a developed nation if Malaysians continue to be loyal, dedicated and responsible in carrying out their responsibilities, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia had been successful in its development programmes because the people had proven to be caring and committed in ensuring such success.

"Insya Allah (God will-

ing), we will be able to achieve our objectives of Vision 2020," he told about 1,000 officers and men of the defence forces who had served under the United Nations in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Cambodia and Namibia.

It was held at the Defence Ministry mosque in Jalan Padang Tembak.

He said the country could not have enjoyed peace, harmony and prosperity if the people themselves did not volunteer to join the defence forces.

"Malaysia is fortunate as it did not have to resort to

conscription to get the people to join the armed forces as in other countries.

"Malaysians have voluntarily offered to join the armed forces and serve the country.

"Therefore, we see no need for conscription or compulsory service," Dr Mahathir told the gathering after breaking fast at the mosque.

Also present were Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Wan Bakar Wan Mohammad, Armed Forces Chief Jen Datuk Ismail Omar and chiefs of the vari-

ous services.

Dr Mahathir said he was thankful that the country was peaceful and the people lived in harmony, and added that the armed forces had a big role in making this possible.

"Previously, the country faced the communist threat and the armed forces were responsible for overcoming it although many of the soldiers were killed and injured.

"In 1990, the communists laid down their arms and the burden of the armed forces was lightened.

"Even though the threat

is over, we need a strong army," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the Malaysian Armed Forces had gained international respect and recognition for participating in United Nations peace missions abroad, and the soldiers had served with dedication regardless of the climates.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia decided to send troops to help peacekeeping missions because the Government wanted to ease the hardships and suffering of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia and Cambodia — irrespective of religion, race or creed.