

18 MAR 1996
Mahathir-JMF
POLICE AND ARMY PERSONNEL FOR JMF

KULIM, March 18 (Bernama) -- Police and army personnel will be assigned to the Johor Military Force (JMF) if it is unable to find candidates to fill existing vacancies, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

They would perform duties as JMF staff, he added.

Mahathir said a decision was taken on the role of the JMF, and if it could resolve the issue of its structure and administration, the government would allow it to fill the vacancies caused by retirement.

"If the vacancies cannot be filled, then we have to assign police and army personnel to carry out the duties," he told reporters after opening the Kulim Hi-Tech Industrial Park here.

The JMF, whose duties are to provide security for the Johor Sultan and palace, is the only military force under state administration.

Dr Mahathir said the recruitment was approved only to fill the vacancies created as a result of retirement and it was not an exercise to increase the JMF strength in the real sense.

Recently, Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar said the Johor State Government was allowed to proceed with the recruitment, but it would have to follow the rules.

The state government could continue assigning JMF personnel for guard and escort duties for the Johor Sultan, he said when commenting on an earlier news report.

In the report, Menteri Besar Abdul Ghani Othman was quoted as saying that the intended recruitment was not to expand the force but only to fill vacancies due to retirement.

Dr Mahathir said the JMF was not trained for any specific duties, and the nation would lose if the government recruited those trained in various fields only to perform security duties.

On an earlier decision to absorb the JMF into the army, he said the government would have to accord similar treatment to the JMF members as those for the army if this was carried out.

He added, however, that the JMF still came under the army administration but it did not enjoy the same benefits as those for the army since they were not considered to be on par with the army.

To a question whether the latest development meant that the government was softening its position vis-a-vis the institution of rulers, Dr Mahathir said: "Sometimes, we have to be firm, sometimes we are soft... if we are too firm, it will not be good too."

He said the government would not want to be continuously in dispute with the institution of rulers, if they were amenable the government too must reciprocate by being good to them. -- BERNAMA

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