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No possibility of rigging postal votes, says Syed Hamid

THERE is no possibility that postal votes cast by members of the armed forces could be rigged, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said.

Members of the armed forces cast their votes in the presence of Election Commission officers, he said, replying to points raised during the debate on the Supply Bill 1999.

To a proposal by Mohamed Sabu (Pas-Kubang Krian) that representatives be allowed to witness the casting of postal votes, Syed Hamid said this was not possible as the armed forces should be free from political activities.

He said the presence of representatives from the various parties would expose the camps to political activities.

He also said the Royal Malaysian Air Force fighter jets would be mobilised "for appropriate action" if there were more encroachments into Malaysian airspace by the Republic of Singapore Air Force.

Syed Hamid said the Government would no longer compromise on issues concerning the country's security or sovereignty.

He said special privilege given to RSAF aircraft to use Malaysian airspace was terminated on Sept 18.

He said the Government had taken various measures to act against such encroachments.

These included diplomatic protests and stepping up monitoring of Malaysian airspace.

"The defence forces have also acquired an air defence radar system which is capable of tracing low-flying aircraft which encroach into Malaysian airspace."

Last week, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Singapore aircraft on search and rescue operations would be granted immediate permission to enter Malaysian airspace.

This was agreed at a meeting between Dr Mahathir and Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong last week.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa told the House that all rural areas in Peninsular Malaysia would be supplied with electricity and piped water by 2000.

"We have targeted 2010 for rural areas in Sabah and Sarawak to have electricity and piped water," he said in his winding up speech on the Supply Bill 1999.

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