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Mahathir-East Timor

MALAYSIA WILLING TO SEND TROOPS TO EAST TIMOR, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PETALING JAYA, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia is willing to serve in the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force in East Timor.

He said UN secretary-general Kofi Annan had asked him whether Malaysia could contribute forces if needed.

"Malaysia said yes. We are quite willing to serve in East Timor and if it is fine with everybody, we will send our troops there," he told reporters after opening the 12th Commonwealth Law Conference at the Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre here today.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked if Malaysia would send its troops to East Timor as Indonesia has agreed to allow an international peacekeeping force there.

Thousands of East Timorese are feared to have been killed and tens of thousands made homeless in the rampage by pro-Jakarta militias following the Aug 30 UN-supervised referendum in which the majority of East Timorese voted for independence.

Asked on Kelantan Umno liaison chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's prediction that the general election would be held in November, Dr Mahathir said in jest: "He must know something which I don't."

Tengku Razaleigh, in a ceramah in Taman Guru in Kelantan on Friday night, was reported to have said that the election would be held before the fasting month, which falls in December, and the monsoons.

"After fasting, many Muslims will leave for Mecca for the haj. And the December rainy spell is not a good time for polls," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh said he made the prediction to ensure that Umno members were fully prepared if the election were to be held suddenly.

-- BERNAMA

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