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Pas, DAP support Asean lead role in East Timor

KOTA BARU, Fri. - Pas today supported the call by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for Asean to take the lead in peacekeeping operations in East Timor.

"It is better for the peacekeeping duty to be assumed by our own kin rather than unrelated persons," Pas consultative council head Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said at the State Pas headquarters.

Nik Aziz was asked about the Prime Minister's statement that Australia should reduce the size of its forces and be less belligerent in securing peace in East Timor.

Dr Mahathir said this at a Press conference at the United Nations in New York on Wednesday.

Nik Aziz said problems in this region should be resolved by Asean-member countries.

"They (Australians) do not look like Asians and their country is not part of Asia and, perhaps, they look down on Asians."

In Malacca, State Umno treasurer Datuk Wira Abu Seman Yusof said Australian Prime Minister John Howard should not have rebutted Dr Mahathir's claims as untrue.

"I am sure he also watches the Cable News Network. I saw on CNN days ago Australian troops pointing guns at several men they suspected as being pro-Jakarta. This proves our PM's claims."

In Kuala Lumpur, DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang while supporting Dr Mahathir's calls for Asean to take the lead in peacekeeping efforts, also supported Howard's statement that Malaysia must be prepared to provide more troops to the multinational force.

"Asean has failed itself, Indonesia and East Timor in not convening an emergency meeting to discuss a lead role for Asean in the East Timor peacekeeping," Lim said in Press statement.

"If Asean is serious in wanting to take the lead in the international force in East Timor, and it ought to, it must collectively contribute the most number of troops compared to any other single nation."

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