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No need for naval base in Langkawi

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THE recent announcement by Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain to build a naval base at Pulau Langkawi has taken many Malaysians by surprise.

It is hoped that this is not planned by the Federal Government and is merely an idea proposed by the Kedah State Government.

One needs to really ask the question: Do we really need another naval base in Malaysia?

More importantly, should we spend our limited funds on building naval bases, or should we utilise the money for the development of the living standard of Malaysians in general?

What real benefits do we get from the construction of yet another naval base? Who are we defending ourselves against?

These are pertinent questions which need urgent answers as we are talking about billions of ringgit to be utilised for the construction of these giant concrete bases.

Also, we should consider the repercussions of having military personnel on an island filled with tourists.

Paradise with armament? Tourists would definitely shy away from such a paradise.

Langkawi is known internally and externally as a tourist destination and an international conference centre.

This is largely due to the efforts of our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Therefore, Langkawi must remain as such, and not as the site of a naval base.

Our Prime Minister's intentions and aspirations are to ensure that Langkawi be as developed an island as Singapore - pleasant to live and pleasant to see.

Kampung houses and gardens need to be rebuilt and organised. Smallholders' land need to be converted into more productive and sustainable land.

All in all, there are a million and one things to do before Langkawi can be as Singapore.

But this would also involve millions of ringgit.

As such, the proposed naval and military base should and must be cancelled.

The following are two reasons which justify such a cancellation:

- * There is no real need for Malaysia to have another military base; and
- * It is very unlikely that we are ever going to war anytime soon.

It is also to be noted that what Malaysia needs are more patrol boats, vehicles and armaments for the military and the police to combat threats from pirates, robbers and terrorists.

What we need is more equipment, not bases.

Funds purportedly allocated for the construction of the proposed naval base in Langkawi should be utilised for the purchase of such military hardware.

We should also bear in mind what our priority is as a developing country.

Should we arm ourselves to the teeth or utilise what funds we have to develop the livelihoods of our people?

Can we afford to build more naval bases at the expense of developing our

kampung and the people as a whole?

Let us hope the Government will consider this for the benefit of the people of our beloved nation.