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'We can send 1,000 soldiers to Palestine'

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Malaysia is prepared to send up to 1,000 soldiers to serve as peacekeepers in Palestine should the need arise.

Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Shafie Apdal said steps had been taken to identify the team.

"Until now, the United Nations has not come back to us on this. We are prepared to send our men the moment we receive the request.

"If they (the United Nations) want a small contingent, we will send a small contingent. If they want a bigger team, we are prepared," he said.

He was speaking to reporters after officiating at a career fair organised by the Ex-Servicemen Affairs Corporation in Kompleks Perhebat in Sungai Buloh today.

The three-day fair aims to bring together industrialists and ex-servicemen as well as those who are about to leave the service to enable them to secure jobs.

Last week, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced Malaysia's readiness to participate in the UN peacekeeping mission to protect Palestinians from Israeli oppression.

He made the statement during the ninth summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Doha, Qatar.

It was learnt that the armed forces had proposed to send a mechanised battalion to Palestine.

Shafie said the armed forces were committed to put an end to oppression in Palestine.

"We have the capability (to participate in such a mission) as we have proven it in many missions before, with the latest being Dili in East Timor."

Shafie also said the Defence Ministry had not received the geologists' report on sinkholes at the Oran Camp in Perlis.

He said the ministry had sent its engineers and experts to assist State geologists to conduct soil tests.

As such, he said, the decision to relocate the camp could not be made until the final report was ready.

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