

23 MAY 2002

Mahathir-Press

MALAYSIA WON'T SEEK FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO FIGHT TERRORISM

By: Amin Husaini Harun

SEOUL, May 23 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will not ask for foreign military assistance in its fight against terrorism internally, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here today.

"We can handle our own affairs without foreign military assistance," he said in his reply during a press conference on the second day of his three-day official visit to South Korea.

A journalist with a foreign news agency had asked whether Malaysia would seek US military assistance in fighting terrorism as the Philippines had done against the Abu Sayyaf group in its southern region.

He said Malaysia had managed to contain extremist groups within the country by detaining them under local detention law. Authorities had evidence that members of the militant group KMM had indulged in robberies, killing of a local legislator and attempting to steal weapons before their arrest.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's relationship with the US had improved and that the present Bush Administration was more appreciative of Malaysian policies especially in her fight against terrorism.

The Prime Minister said that during his meeting with Korean President Kim Dae-Jung earlier today, they had generally discussed the terrorism issue -- about the causes of terrorism and how best to get rid of the problem.

In reply to a question whether North Korea was a terrorist state, as the US charged, he said that as far as Malaysia was concerned there was no clear evidence that North Korea was attempting to attack anyone.

He said that he had no plans at the moment to visit North Korea although he had visited that country when he was a Deputy Prime Minister.

On Malaysia-South Korea relationship, Dr Mahathir said he and Kim discussed ways of strengthening further the current strong bilateral ties and also between Korea and Asean.

He said Kim was supportive of the formalisation of the Asean+3 (China, Japan and South Korea) with the setting up of a secretariat which Malaysia offered to host.

Replying to another question, he said the Asean+3 forum was a form of summit of East Asian countries.

On the Naza KIA Sdn Bhd and KIA Motor Company tie up, Dr Mahathir said it was just a business venture to market Korean-made vehicles in Malaysia.

He said it was not to be a third national car project. Malaysia's national car project currently tied up Proton and Mitsubishi of Japan.

The creation of a future national car project was also not in keeping with the present trend where automotive companies were now gearing more towards mergers.

Asked about his achievements as the Prime Minister, he said one of the best achievement was the racial unity prevailing in the country.

-- BERNAMA

AHH AO