

Malaysia does not believe in military alliances - Mahathir

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From Leslean Arshad

LONDON, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Monday that Malaysia does not believe in military alliances.

"We want to be independent, have our own policy," he said after delivering a talk on "The Future of Democracy in Asia" at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, here.

When asked on Malaysia's defence plan, Dr Mahathir said that getting tied to a group of countries in a military alliance will get Malaysia involved in their politics.

He said that although Malaysia is a member of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA), with the five countries deciding to work together, it does not mean that Malaysia has to follow their policies.

"We can have our own (defence) policies," he said.

The FPDA, signed in 1971, brings together Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

Dr Mahathir also stressed that he would not like to have foreign countries having a military base in Malaysia.

"We want to be free from any involvement of other countries," he said.

On dealing with claims over outstanding issues involving neighbouring countries like Singapore, Dr Mahathir said that although negotiations may not be so successful, Malaysia

does not intend to go to war with them.

He said Singapore is more powerful than Malaysia though it may be small in size, and drew laughter from the packed hall.

"I don't see war as a way to settle (issues). We will continue to negotiate although there may be no results," he said.

Dr Mahathir also suggested that claimants refer cases to the International Court of Justice, commonly referred to as the World Court, but added that both sides must, before that, agree to abide by the decision made by the court.

Malaysia, he said, had referred two landmark cases to the World Court.

In a dispute with Indonesia, he said in an apparent reference to the Ligitan and Sipadan territorial dispute, the World Court very "wisely" declared that the islands belonged to Malaysia.

On the other hand, in the Pulau Batu Putih dispute with Singapore, he said, the court "unwisely" decided it belonged to Singapore

"Sometimes we gain some, sometimes we lose some," he said, drawing laughter from the audience, and added that "when you go to the World Court, you will be at the mercy of the judge".

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