

## **UN Day: Peace-loving Malaysia actively engaged in peacekeeping missions**

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**By Samantha Tan**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is regarded as a peace loving country due to its firm commitment to uphold peace and active engagement in peacekeeping missions at conflict areas on foreign soil under the auspices of the United Nations (UN).

Commenting on Malaysia's contributions, Afghanistan Ambassador to Malaysia, Atiqullah Atifmal said the Afghan people were grateful for Malaysia's contribution and support, especially during the time against the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan (1979-1989).

"Malaysia has a long and proud history of supporting UN peacekeeping forces around the world. This shows Malaysia's firm commitment towards UN missions in maintaining peace in the world," he told Bernama in a recent interview in conjunction with the 73rd UN Day today.

UN Day marks the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945, of the UN Charter and Oct 24 has been celebrated as UN Day since 1948.

Recalling Malaysia's contributions in Afghanistan, Atifmal said Malaysia had sent a group of 40 doctors to his country on a humanitarian mission, and among them were several women.

"There was also a group of doctors going to Pakistan's Chaman province of Quetta to help Afghanistan refugees. Malaysia also supported us in many international conferences and was one of the countries supporting Afghanistan by sending aid for disasters such as earthquakes and floods.

“In Afghanistan, people have good perception about Malaysia, that they (Malaysians) are helpful and these are among the examples by which Malaysia is helping in the peace process in Afghanistan,” he added.

On the UN’s role in the challenging world today, Atifmal said its role was vital for peace and development, eradication of poverty and therefore, the UN continued to be active, especially in peacekeeping missions, coming from different countries and serving in many parts of the world.

“It (The UN) also helps the economy of the country, assists in fighting terrorism, gives education facilities, secures the rule of law and also helps underdeveloped countries to overcome poverty and provide job opportunities. All these activities, as we have witnessed, are very important for the progress and development of a country, especially the underdeveloped,” he noted.

Meanwhile, Timor-Leste Ambassador to Malaysia, Maria Olandina Isabel Caeiro Alves said Malaysia had supported and assisted the country during the turmoil of Timor-Leste’s struggling years.

Since 1999, Malaysia had contributed to many UN peacekeeping missions in the country such as ‘Operation Astute’ during the 2006 East Timorese crisis, she recalled.

“I remember, Malaysia was one of the first UN member-countries that supported Timor-Leste by sending its police force until it totalled 240 officers and men throughout the territory. Malaysia also donated 32 military trucks and related equipment, apart from 28 vehicles from the Malaysian Police to Timor-Leste,” she added.

Caeiro Alves said the support did not end there. In 2003, almost eight months after Timor-Leste achieved independence, Malaysia’s Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was the first head of government to visit Timor-Leste.

“He (Dr Mahathir) went there with commitment to help in, and support the reconstruction and nation-building process. In the same year when Timor-Leste established its embassy in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian government donated a Proton Perdana and funding assistance to start the embassy’s activities,” she said.

Caeiro Alves said Malaysia also continued to support Timor-Leste's aspiration to join ASEAN.

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