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Walk For Global Peace

By **Melati Mohd Ariff**

(in Conjunction With The International Peace Day On Sept 21)

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 (Bernama) - On Sept 7 in 2001, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) had passed Resolution 55/282 that declared Sept 21 as the International Day of Peace.

To commemorate the occasion, ex-servicemen worldwide would take part in an event named 'Walk for Peace'.

This year, some one million former servicemen worldwide are expected to take part in this event, organised by the World Veteran Federation (WVF).

WVF is an international body comprising 175 ex-servicemen organisations from 90 nations. It is a non-governmental organisation that has consultative status with the United Nations.

This federation that represents the interest of more than 25 million former soldiers worldwide has a Malaysian as its president; Lt Kol (Rtd) Datuk Abdul Hamid Ibrahim

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia would be holding its inaugural Walk For Peace on Sept 21, to be staged at Dewan Merdeka, Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) in Kuala Lumpur.

It is the effort of the Malaysian Armed Forces Veterans Council (MAVVM) with the collaboration of Friends To Mankind.

Organising committee chairman, Maj Jen (Rtd) Datuk Khairuddin Abu Bakar told Bernama that about 3,500 participants including former servicemen would be taking part in the event.

Among the Malaysian armed forces veterans organisations that have confirmed participation are the MVATM, Royal Malay Regiment Officers Club, Malaysian Commando Veterans Club, Malaysian Intelligence Corps Veteran Club, Ex-Malaysian Military Police Association, Ex-Services Association of Malaysia and Ex-British Army Club of Malaysia.

Apart from Friends to Mankind, the other NGOs participating in this event are Seniman Malaysia, Salam Foundation, Aman Malaysia, Malaysian Indians Cultural Foundation and Malaysian Muslim Consumers Association as well as several schools.

As this years event will be held during the fasting month of Ramadan, Khairuddin said all activities are to be held at the Dewan Merdeka in PWTC.

Included in the itinerary is the recital of the Message of Peace from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the performance of the song Hari Yang Aman(Day of Peace) specially composed by Khir Rahman and his wife Siti

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Jasmina Ibrahim.

At exactly twelve noon, a one-minute silence would be observed simultaneously with the other similar events held all across the globe.

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OBJECTIVES

Khairuddin said the organiser hoped that the Walk for Peace would create public awareness that peace is priceless to mankind.

"Via this event, we wish to create interactions that would foster unity and peace among Malaysians of various ethnic groups.

"Unity goes hand in hand with peace. We should refrain from creating racial issues as this creates tension among us.

"If all quarters maintain unity and are respectful of each other, the nation would continue to enjoy peace and security," said Khairuddin who had served with the Malaysian Battalion (MalBat) in Somalia in 1995.

APPRECIATE PEACE

During his six months tour of duty in Somalia, Khairuddin had witnessed the massive destruction of properties and sufferings of people in this war-torn country.

Khairuddin could still remember clearly the poignant and heart-wrenching faces child-carrying Somali women, who frequented the camp where he was based, to beg for food.

"Crops were devastated, residences destroyed; there was nothing left. The people suffered, children could not go to school and the economy was shattered," he said.

Khairuddin also recalled seeing children loitering around and sleeping at the railway station, when he was attending a course in India in the early 1980s.

"In a train ride from New Delhi to Srinagar, I threw out a piece of dried *capati* outside the window to some people who were begging for food and alms. It was heart-wrenching to see them -- from the very young and the very old -- scrambling for that piece of food. I can never forget that experience.

"I hope Malaysians are aware of the high price to achieve peace and prosperity. They should do away with trivial matters," said Khairuddin.

EDUCATING THE CHILDREN

Khairuddin is hoping that the participation of school children in the Walk for Peace would nurture the love for peace and unity among them.

A staunch believer in starting them young, Khairuddin said the youngsters should be taught to live in harmony with everybody, regardless of race.

In conjunction with the Walk for Peace, an exhibition that highlights the sufferings and destruction caused by war would also be staged at the PWTC.

Meanwhile, Friends to Mankind vice-president Yasotha Kishna said the NGO supported MVATMs move to organise the Walk for Peace event as both organisations propagate peace as the objective.

However such efforts should be shouldered by all, and not only confined to groups or associations.

"Every individual has a responsibility towards maintaining peace. It should not be left to groups or associations - all must play a part in this calling.

"One of the principles of Friends to Mankind is to take the well being of others into consideration at all times. When you practice this principle in life, you will always take the feelings of others into consideration in whatever that you do," said Yasotha, who is hoping that more would join the Walk for Peace event.

Those who are interested to participate in the event can forward their enquiries and registration at the MVATM, ATM Public Affairs Department, Defence Ministry, Menara TH Perdana, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman or call 03-4297 1743 or visit www.mvatm.org.

Registration can also be made with Friends to Mankind at 03-61577746.

Participation is free of charge.

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