

CNS7535

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MALAYSIA OFFERS TEMPORARY ASYLUM TO BOSNIANS

Mahathir-Bosnia (with pix)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysia today offered temporary asylum to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav republic which is suffering from atrocities committed by neighbouring Serbia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the people of Bosnia would be allowed to live in Malaysia until peace returned to their country.

+We hope that Malaysians will extend assistance to them because they will need food and shelter,+ he told reporters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang on his return from Jakarta where he attended the 10th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Dr Mahathir said in a lighter vein that Malaysia was now accepting people who were not even seeking asylum. +Their number now is about one million,+ he said.

He was apparently referring to the immigrant workers engaged by the plantation and construction industries and serving as domestic maids. -- more

▼06/09/15-27MST

CNS7580

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Mahathir-Bosnia 2 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said he hoped that Malaysian sympathisers would provide food or shelter to the Bosnians during their stay in Malaysia.

Deputy Home Affairs Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayub, who was at the airport, said the Malaysian offer of asylum was the first time such a decision was taken.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that Malaysia would respond positively if the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) decided to send troops to the defence of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Asked about the reported intention of several quarters and individuals to go to Bosnia to help defend the people there, Dr Mahathir said: +If they want to go, we cannot stop them.+

However, he added, if they fall victim to the aggressors, the people and certain quarters will question why the (Malaysian) government did nothing in the first place (to prevent them from going). -- more

▼06/09/16-59MST

CNS7585

U GE 06-09 00189 EA623

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Mahathir-Bosnia 3 Kuala Lumpur

+I feel their action is more of spirit than capability,+ he said.

+To fight with the Serbs, we must first be trained in warfare. If you want to fight (the Serbian army committing atrocities in Bosnia), become a soldier and get trained and then go and help,+ he said.

+What is the point of going empty-handed and (finally) falling victim. The spirit is good but there is no capability,+ he added.

Asked about the demonstration against Serbian aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina by about 2,000 people, believed to be mainly university students and PAS members, at the Dataran Merdeka today, Dr Mahathir said he did not whether the demonstration was in support of the Bosnians or for the political aims of the demonstrators.

He said such demonstrations organised by PAS and Parti Semangat 46 were only for political mileage.

+The death of many Bosnians is an opportunity for them to garner political support,+ he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was different, it gave priority to provision of aid. -- more

▼06/09/17-14MST

U GE 06-09 00241 EA624

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Mahathir-Bosnia 4 (last) Kuala Lumpur

The Prime Minister said he was surprised at the large amount of money donated by Malaysians to the Bosnian Fund organised by the Utusan Malaysia newspaper. (Within 25 days of its launching, the fund had collected almost \$900,000.)

+I will raise the matter at the Umno Supreme Council meeting tomorrow in the hope that Umno can donate as much as we are able to,+ he said.

Dr Mahathir said he would brief the Umno Supreme Council members on the decisions reached and his experience at the 10th NAM summit in Jakarta.

He also said that the interest to join NAM was growing although initially member countries felt that the movement was losing its importance now that there was no more east-west tension and a +non-aligned+ country as such.

He said the growing interest was reflected in the ceremony to plant saplings at the Taman Mini in Jakarta when the organisers had only brought 106 trees but the NAM membership had already grown to 108.

Dr Mahathir said the NAM summit had given South countries the opportunity to express their opinions on world political and economic trends and the problems in Bosnia and Somalia.

He also said that the NAM political bureau would issue a statement on several political matters, including the Serbian atrocities against the people of Bosnia. -- Bernama