

PM: JAPAN MUST PLAY BIGGER ROLE

Tokyo can do more in international affairs, says Dr M

By WONG CHUN WAI

TOKYO: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has renewed his call to Japan to play a more direct role in international affairs.

He said Japan, as a member of the United Nations Security Council, should not merely concentrate on footing the bill of international diplomatic efforts.

The Prime Minister raised this matter when he met his Japanese counterpart Kiichi Miyazawa on Thursday.

Talking to Malaysian reporters, Dr Mahathir said he raised the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina with Miyazawa, appealing to the Japanese to play a greater role in pushing the Western powers to help end the civil war there.

"Today, the Western powers talk a lot about human rights but in Bosnia, there is a lot of oppression and killings going on but no action has been taken," he added.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated his message to the

overseas trips
Group of Seven industrialised nations, urging them to keep in mind during their July summit the effects of their decisions on weak, developing countries.

"They have the idea that by re-valuing the yen, they can reduce the Japanese balance of trade. In fact, it doesn't because Japan merely increases its efficiency. They will suffer very little cost increases and as a matter of fact, they become more competitive," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he understood that Japan was now working on the basis of 100 yen to one US dollar, which meant the balance of payment will remain but the debt of developing countries like Malaysia will increase.

The Prime Minister was optimistic Malaysia will see a new flow of investments from Japan which appeared to be recovering from its brief economic slowdown.

He said Malaysia was glad to see the recession coming to an end and that Japan was on its way to

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recovery.

Dr Mahathir also raised the question of soft loans from Japan in his talk with Miyazawa.

Tokyo has been reluctant to provide any more low-interest loans to Malaysia as it now considers the country to be well-off.

Dr Mahathir said he explained to Miyazawa that many infrastructural projects in Malaysia were meant to support foreign investments.

"We pointed out that for every dollar of investment in the country, the Government has to provide at least 10 sen worth of infrastructure," he said, adding that the benefits were also enjoyed by the Japanese investors.

Miyazawa, however, advised Malaysia to concentrate on particular projects which might qualify for soft loans.

Asked whether the East Asian Economic Caucus was brought up during their 45-minute talk, Dr Mahathir said it was not.

He said Malaysia had proposed the EAEC because East Asians must have sufficient clout to influence the attitude of the European Community and North Atlantic nations.

He said the United States was probably determined to see the EAEC would not be formed so "they will always be managing trade."

On Cambodia, Dr Mahathir said Miyazawa pledged that Japan would not retreat from its commitment of personnel to the Cambodian peace process.

Dr Mahathir said postponing the elections in Cambodia would not solve anything as it would not make the Khmer Rouge co-operative.

He also underlined the need for Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Supreme National Council of Cambodia (SNC) chief, to play a leading role in the peace process.

On reports that the faction belonging to Cambodian leader Son Sann might pull out of the elections, Dr Mahathir said: "That will be very unfortunate."