

▼21/09/21-10P11

CNS3372

R GE 21-09 00233 EF727

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(Embargo: for release at 2200hrs, Sept 21)

Mahathir-Major

MAHATHIR APPEALS TO MAJOR TO RECONSIDER POSITION ON BOSNIA

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today appealed to his British counterpart, John Major, to reconsider his country's opposition to the launching of air strikes against the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina before the situation deteriorates further.

He said Britain need to change its stance "before the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is forever cemented in history as the blackest catastrophe of the modern world and a dark page in the annals of Europe and European civilisation."

In his speech at a dinner he hosted at Sri Perdana in honour of Major's visit to Malaysia, the Prime Minister said eloquent speeches, noble declarations and appeals were not enough to end the atrocities without the political will translated into resolute and credible action.

Given the British tradition of upholding respect for the rule of law and principles on international relations as well as of decisiveness, he hoped Major's leadership in Britain and among the European Community (EC) would bring influence to end the ongoing holocaust in Bosnia.

Major earlier arrived here from Tokyo with his wife, Norma Major, Trade Minister Richard Needham, several top government officials as well as corporate leaders for a two-day official visit. -- more

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▼21/09/21-09MST

CNS3373

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Mahathir-Major 2 Kuala Lumpur (Embargo)

Dr Mahathir regretted that the European backed down on their threats against the Serbs when they (Serbs) arrogantly ignored the warnings.

"Only action now will correct this loss of credibility. You are sending the wrong signals to certain countries east of Yugoslavia, countries with a past history of violent acquisition of other peoples' territories," he added.

He said while Malaysia could understand Britain's concern that recourse to large-scale air strikes might jeopardise the United Nations humanitarian efforts, "our heart cries out to the tragedy of an entire race being wiped out in total disregard for even elementary decency."

Britain also did not agree to the air strikes for fear that it would escalate the fighting in Bosnia as well as precipitate retaliation upon British and other UN soldiers.

"Malaysians may be once again over-reacting. But we cannot accept that it is right and just and democratic to sit by and watch while such brutish acts are committed," he said. -- more

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▼21/09/21-10MST

CNS3374

R GE 21-09 00187 EF729

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Mahathir-Major 3 Kuala Lumpur (Embargo)

According to the Prime Minister, the brutal conflict at Europe's very own doorstep exposed the limitations of European political cooperation as well as shame the vaunted western advocacy of democracy, justice and human rights.

"I sometimes wonder if I can ever adequately express the extent of Malaysia's anguish and distress at the continued genocide and ethnic-cleansing conducted by the Serbs against the Bosnian Muslims."

Dr Mahathir recounted an incident of how a six-year-old child was repeatedly raped by the Serbs in front of her mother who was not allowed to help until the girl died.

The incident caused a staff member of the United States State Department to resign in protest over the passivity of the US policy in Bosnia.

"What kind of people are we to accept this kind of behaviour without raising a finger to prevent the recurrence," he asked, noting that this act was being repeated hundreds of times as Serbs, and now Croats, expand their territories by force of arms. -- more

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▼21/09/21-11MST

CNS3375

R GE 21-09 00188 EF730

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Mahathir-Major 4 Kuala Lumpur (Embargo)

On bilateral relations, the Prime Minister said it had remained close, cordial and healthy with links that were established since the colonial days. The links were nurtured and expanded into a network of interaction encompassing cooperation in the fields of education, trade and investment, tourism and defence.

He was happy to note that the two-way trade had registered a 10 per cent increase last year despite prolonged economic recession globally.

Dr Mahathir also stressed on the importance of the early conclusion of the Uruguay Round to enable free trade not only for Malaysia, but also for Britain and other trading nations.

As such, Britain, as a leading member of the EC, should try to influence the EC towards a successful and early conclusion of those negotiations before the end of this year.

The Prime Minister also touched on the existence of British private sector in Malaysia which he said would act as a catalyst for the continued expansion of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. -- more

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▼21/09/21-11MST

CNS3376

R GE 21-09 00139 EF731

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Mahathir-Major 5 (last) Kuala Lumpur (Embargo)

Apart from pointing out that more new opportunities would be created as Malaysia undertakes further industrialisation, he also invited British companies to avail themselves of the facilities at the offshore financial centre in Labuan.

On education, Dr Mahathir expressed his gratitude that British institutes of higher learning have been able to accommodate more than 10,000 Malaysian students.

However, he said Malaysia had to resort to twinning programmes with British universities and colleges due to the progressively higher cost of education there.

The Prime Minister also mentioned about the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah's state visit to Britain in November which he said "reflects on the healthy and positive state of relations between the two countries." -- Bernama

JO RM

▼21/09/21-12MST