

CNS0273

R GE 21-10 00225 EB539

aae

Mahathir

(EMBARGO: For release at 4.30pm, Oct 21)

COMMONWEALTH CAN PUT ON PRESSURE TO RESOLVE BOSNIA ISSUE, DR MAHATHIR

From Kuah Guan Oo

NICOSIA (CYPRUS), Oct 21, (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Commonwealth members can join forces to bring pressure on the powers who hold the key to the solution of the Bosnian problem, just as they had joined forces to tear down the wall of apartheid in South Africa.

He said the Commonwealth had, through concerted effort, resolved even the most intractable of political problems, apartheid, and there was a lesson to be learnt here.

"World leaders, in trying to find a solution to the problems in Bosnia-Herzegovina, can usefully draw upon the Commonwealth experience in South Africa," he said during the opening ceremony of the five-day Commonwealth summit.

The prime minister is the second of five speakers chosen to reply to the opening address of host, President Glafkos Clerides, who is the incoming chairman of the summit.

The first speaker is outgoing chairman President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe while the others are Prime Minister Dame Eugenia Charles of Dominica, Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica and Prime Minister Paul Keating of Australia, besides Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku. -- more

KGO JK

▼21/10/10-38MST

CNS0275

R GE 21-10 00237 EB540

aae

Mahathir 2 Nicosia (embargo)

The summit is attended by 37 heads of government out of the 48 Commonwealth members eligible to attend the biennial conference.

Dr Mahathir said, "We in the Commonwealth must help to find an equitable and just solution to this (Bosnian) holocaust if we want to stand tall and uphold the very principles that we had so vehemently lauded in Harare."

The principles lauded by the Commonwealth during its summit in Harare in 1991 were the protection and promotion of democracy, and the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights.

"Some of us even went so far as to say that where human rights violations are concerned we have a right to intervene even in the internal affairs of a country," he said.

"Yet in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where ethnic cleansing involves murders and rapes of Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serbs aided by the Serbian government of rump Yugoslavia, the righteousness that some of us display over minor infringement of human rights, is remarkably absent.

"Instead the Serbs are to be rewarded with territories they have ethnically cleansed. Can we, in the Commonwealth, who had appealed for outside cooperation to help some of our members in need, ignore the Bosnian tragedy and elect to be silent simply because this is not a Commonwealth affair?" he added. -- more

KGO JK

▼21/10/10-45MST

Mahathir 3 Nicosia (embargo)

Noting that Malaysia's stand on the Bosnian question was well known, Dr Mahathir said many were inclined to think that Malaysia was influenced by its common religion (with Bosnia).

"I would like to point out that Malaysia had been equally active and as vehement in South Africa, Namibia, Cambodia and other non-Muslim communities which faced similar problems.

"We feel strongly when injustice and oppression are perpetrated anywhere," he said.

The prime minister said the incessant slaughter of innocent people in Bosnia, as shown over TV, would turn even the most sturdy of stomachs.

"And all for what? For the sake of territorial aggrandisement! For the sake of ethnic superiority! For the sake of a Serbian dream! Enough is enough," he added.

On the progress made by the Commonwealth since Harare, Dr Mahathir said it had moved many steps forward in several areas of cooperation. -- more
KGO JK

▼21/10/10-47MST

CNS0278

R GE 21-10 00206 EB542

aae

Mahathir 4 Nicosia (embargo)

In political cooperation, the greatest success of the organisation had been in South Africa where the South African parliament had recently endorsed a bill on the setting up of a Transitional Executive Council.

"We hail this event as an irreversible step that will bring South Africa nearer to the Commonwealth goal of a free, democratic, non-racial and prosperous country," he said, adding that he was sure that the Commonwealth members were ready to help the country recover from the after-effects of sanctions.

The prime minister also said that while Malaysia rejoiced at the recent signing of the Peace Accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, it grieved at the news of the ongoing conflict in Somalia, Georgia and other regions of the world.

While welcoming the economic success of many emerging "dragons and tigers", he said Malaysia worried about growing protectionism through the emergence of trade blocs.

"We keep hoping, as we had hoped all these years, that the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations, the guardian of free trade, will come to a conclusive end by the close of this year," he said. -- more

KGO JK

▼21/10/10-54MST

CNS0279

R GE 21-10 00123 EB543

aae

Mahathir 5 (last) Nicosia (embargo)

Dr Mahathir also said that since the Commonwealth membership spanned the North-South divide, he hoped that they could fully explore a common position on these issues during the executive sessions of the summit.

Recalling his tongue-in-cheek statements at an earlier summit that there was no common "wealth" in the Commonwealth, the prime minister said he would like to add a sequel to that by saying that they could, if they wanted, make common "wealth" out of the Commonwealth.

"And this common 'wealth' need not necessarily be confined to material wealth. It should transcend the material to include racial harmony and religious tolerance." -- Bernama

KGO JK

▼21/10/10-55MST