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SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS NOT PREPARING FOR WAR, SAYS MAHATHIR

From Salbiah Said

NEW DELHI, Dec. 15 ⁹³ (Bernama) -- Prime Minister ⁹³ *Over seas Trip* Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed speculation that the acquisition of military equipment and aircraft by Southeast Asian nations of late signalled preparations for war.

"It is not a provocation of war with each other as we have to replace old equipment and aircraft," he told a joint press conference attended by Malaysian and Indian journalists here.

In Malaysia's case, its jetfighters such as the Northrop F5, which were obsolete, might need to be replaced for fear of endangering the lives of its pilots, he said.

He added: "We naturally have to buy the latest. China, for instance, has become richer and, naturally, they would allocate money for their defence."

Dr Mahathir also said both governments had held talks on defence cooperation, in view of Malaysia's planned purchase of the Russian MiG 29, in the area of servicing and production of components. -- more

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Dr Mahathir lashed out at the international community whom, he said, spoke at length on human rights but did not make any effort to prevent further massacres of Bosnians by Serbian soldiers in their own homeland.

He said: "This is one instance we can say they are just talking and not doing anything."

"I am pessimistic of the situation in the Balkans, and sending of our troops is not going to make any difference... they are not going to stop the Serbs, they only want to get food to the people who are under seige."

"Even when they are confronted, they are told not to fight against the Serbs and when the Serbs know that no one is going to stop them, they will go ahead with the massacres and rapes".

The international community have been witnessing innocent people being murdered "right before their very eyes, but they are not going to help them," he added.

Instead, they denied arms to the Bosnians although they knew that the Serbs had been acquiring arms from other sources. "This is the kind of justice we are going to see," he said. -- more

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Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, left for home after holding discussions with Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Zimbabwe president Dr Robert Mugabe.

Dr Mahathir was earlier scheduled to attend the Dec.13 to 15 G-15 Summit of Heads of State and Government which was postponed and will be reconvened here some time between March 15 and April 7.

During his visit here, Dr Mahathir witnessed the signing of a joint venture agreement between Telekom Malaysia Bhd. and Usha Martin Industries Ltd. to operate a mobile cellular phone network in Calcutta.

Several agreements and memoranda of understanding were also signed yesterday.

One was a joint venture agreement between Land and General Bhd. and Ircon Railway Industrial Corporation for railway construction in Malaysia.

Others were a technical assistance agreement between Rubfil (M) Sdn.Bhd. and Rubfila International Ltd. to manufacture heat resistant rubber latex thread in Malaysia and two memoranda of understanding in the fields of education and air conditioner production. -- Bernama

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