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Mahathir-Bosnia

RUSSIA SHOULD ASK SERBS TO WITHDRAW WEAPONS THROUGHOUT BOSNIA

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb. 18 (Bernama) ⁹⁴ -- Russia should tell the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw all their heavy weaponry from the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina and not just Sarajevo. ^(P) Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Sarajevo is not everything; the whole of Bosnia should be liberated from the Serb (forces) and they should withdraw all their weapons," said the Prime Minister.

This was to allow the Bosnians to participate in negotiations without being threatened, he added.

He was responding to reporters' questions about a possible Serb compliance with an ultimatum by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) for the withdrawal of heavy guns around Sarajevo to help bring about a comprehensive solution to the Balkan conflict.

Russia was reported to have asked the Bosnian Serbs to comply with the NATO ultimatum.

Speaking to reporters after launching the Yayasan Kebajikan Anak-Anak Yatim Malaysia (YATIM) at the Pusat Islam here, Dr Mahathir said: "If Russia is sincere, Russia should tell the Serbs to withdraw and stop the fighting and then negotiate.

"I think it is not fair to expect (Bosnian President Alija) Izetbegovic to agree to the terms imposed upon him when he has no freedom to make his stand because they have their guns against him." -- more

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Mahathir-Bosnia 2 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said it was not right to ask people to negotiate "when you are killing them."

On the question of Russian troops joining the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in peace-keeping duties in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he expressed hope that the Russians would not take sides.

"We are not accusing them of not being neutral but we hope they will remain neutral and help disarm the Serbs and make sure negotiations are being held without any threat on the part of the Serbs against the Bosnians," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the likely impact of imminent US trade sanctions against Japan following the failure by both countries to reach a trade agreement.

He said the government was studying it as, at the moment, it was not sure what the effects would be.

But, he said: "We agree that while we should open the market for everybody there should not be any numerical quota of imports by anybody... you buy what you think is fair and what you need, not on the basis of quota."

As to the possible effects of the US-Japan trade impasse on the recently concluded Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Dr Mahathir said the US had withdrawn certain items from what they had agreed to in the Uruguay round.

"This is not a good omen... what is to stop other people from withdrawing (items), then there would be no Uruguay round, no GATT agreement," he added. -- Bernama

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