

Dr M: Serbs must get all arms out of Bosnia

19 FEB 1994

By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Russia should tell the Serbs to withdraw all their heavy weapons from Bosnia-Herzegovina and not just Sarajevo to enable negotiations to be carried out without any threat to the Bosnians, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

“Sarajevo is not everything; the whole of Bosnia should be liberated from the Serbs and they (Serb army) should withdraw all their weapons,” the Prime Minister added.

He was responding to questions from reporters about a possible compliance by the Serbs with the North

Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (Nato) ultimatum to withdraw their heavy weapons from around Sarajevo to help bring about a solution to the Bosnian conflict.

The Prime Minister earlier launched the Malaysian Orphans Welfare Foundation (Yatim) at Pusat Islam.

Dr Mahathir said the withdrawal was necessary to enable the Bosnians to take part in peace negotiations without coming under any threat.

Asked to a comment on a report that Russia had asked the Serbs to comply with the Nato ultimatum, Dr Mahathir said:

“If Russia is sincere, Russia should tell the Serbs to withdraw and stop the fight-

ing 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 pointed at him.

“It is not right to ask people to negotiate when you are killing them,” he said.

To a question about Russian troops joining the United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor) in Bosnia, Dr Mahathir replied he was hopeful 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.

When asked about the likely impact of imminent US trade sanctions against Japan after both countries failed to reach a trade agreement, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was studying the matter as, at the moment, it was not sure of the effects on the country.

However, 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 (GATT), Dr Mahathir said the United States had withdrawn certain items from what they had agreed to in the Uruguay round.

This was not a good omen he said, adding that if other people began withdrawing (items), then there would be no Uruguay round and no GATT agreement.

Japan has rejected the demand for numerical targets during the summit in Washington last Friday, saying it means managed trade and more Government intervention in commercial trade.