

Be neutral, Dr M tells Russia

By ROHAIZAD A. RAHIM

KUALA LUMPUR: Russia must remain neutral with its participation in the United Peace Protection Force (Unprofor), said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

"We are not accusing them of not being neutral, but they must help disarm the Serbs," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Russia must use its clout to get the Serbs to withdraw not only from Sarajevo, but also ensure the liberation of Bosnia-

Herzegovina from the Serbs.

"If they (Russia) are sincere, then they should tell the Serbs to withdraw, stop fighting, and negotiate (for peace).

"But if you go around killing people and then you ask them to negotiate, this is not right."

The prime minister said this when asked to comment on calls for the withdrawal of Serb forces from Sarajevo following a pledge by Russia to provide peacekeeping troops in the area.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said the Serbs

had agreed to pull back artillery and other heavy weapons following a proposal from Russian special envoy Vitaly Churkin to send Russian soldiers to enforce a ceasefire.

Churkin had said he delivered a letter from President Boris Yeltsin to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and to Karadzic requesting them to withdraw their heavy weapons.

Dr Mahathir still maintained that the withdrawal of heavy weapons was essential before negotiations could be conducted.

"The Bosnians can participate but they can't do it when there is a gun pointed at them.

"I think it is not fair to (Bosnian President Alija) Izetbegovic to agree to terms imposed upon him."

On the US threat to initiate trade sanctions against Japan, Dr Mahathir said the matter and its implication were still under study.

However, while agreeing Japan should be more liberal with its market, he said it should not be in the form of a numerical quota.

"You buy what you think is fair and what you need, not on the basis of quota."

On the fact that the threats were made soon after the conclusion of the Uruguay Round for multilateral trade, Dr Mahathir said it was not a good omen.

"The United States has withdrawn certain items from the Uruguay Round. What is there to stop others from withdrawing? Then there will be no Uruguay Round, no GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)."