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Mahathir-Bosnia

MALAYSIA QUESTIONS UN PROHIBITION ON TURKISH, IRANIAN TROOPS FOR BOSNIA

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has questioned the United Nations' prohibition on troops from Turkey and Iran to serve with its peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the sole reason that both countries sympathise with the Muslims there.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad asked why the same reason was not applied in the case of Russia which was allowed to send its troops when it clearly sympathised with the Serbs.

"Why is there this discrimination ... I feel this is double standard practised by the West, which should not be the case," he told reporters at Angkasapuri after recording his Hari Raya Aidilfitri message for the people.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether Malaysia would send more troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina to join the peacekeeping forces (UNPROFOR) as at least 50,000 troops were reportedly required to enforce any peace agreement which might be entered into by the warring factions.

At the same time, Turkey's offer to send a battalion of 1,000 soldiers to the Balkan state has not been entertained by UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali because, going by UN guidelines, Turkey is among the countries which cannot send troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina. -- more

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The guidelines prohibit a UN peacekeeping force in any country from having troops from neighbouring countries or those which have historical ties with it.

However, the guidelines have been violated in the past.

Iran had stated its preparedness to send 10,000 troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina but the offer was rejected by the UN.

Dr Mahathir said that if the guidelines were applied to Turkey, it meant that almost all the European countries which had sent troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot join the UNPROFOR because they are either neighbours or have historical ties.

"Therefore, what is meant by the term immediate neighbour?" asked the prime minister.

He said that if European countries, which had an interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina, could send troops to join UNPROFOR, he could not understand why Turkey and Iran could not.

"This makes it impossible for us to believe the (UN's) claims of being just and the like ... all that is false," he said.

Asked whether Turkish and Iranian troops were prohibited for fear they might supply arms to the Bosnian Muslims, Dr Mahathir said "I would not venture to say that but it seems to be so".

The prime minister said Malaysia, being a small country, had contributed to UN peace missions while some big countries had yet to do so or were prohibited from doing so.

He said the UN should discard its double standard and should not prohibit any member country from joining its peace missions. -- Bernama..

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