

Malaysia has lost faith in ability of UN to help the weak

By OUR REPORTERS

MALAYSIA has lost faith in the ability of the UN and its Security Council to help weak nations in view of their failure to act against Serbian attacks on Gorazde in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We can no longer believe that if anything happens to us, the UN will help. It is clear that the UN is not a body that protects the weak but is an instrument for the large nations to exert their pressure and implement their policies," he said.

Speaking to reporters after presenting excellence awards to Home Ministry staff in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he is saddened by the situation in Bosnia and joined former New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange in criticising the UN for not doing anything to help the Muslims in Gorazde.

Lange had slammed the New Zealand presidency of the UN Security Council for abandoning Bosnians as "sitting ducks", adding that the UN was floundering in an "agony of indecision" in the face of a Serbian advance on the town of Gorazde.

The Serbian attack on Gorazde, a "UN safe area", entered its 19th day yesterday. UN officials said the death toll had reached 302, including 41 children, with another 1,072 wounded.

More than 30,000 refugees are in Gorazde, swelling the population to 65,000 people. It was reported that seven UN soldiers were evacuated yesterday, leaving only five UN military observers in the town, 70km south-east of Sarajevo.

"This (the evacuation) is like surrendering the Bosnians to be killed by the Serbs. I do not understand how they (developed countries) can talk about human rights and impose sanctions on a country when a single person is arrested. But when killings are done in front of their eyes, they are not willing to do anything," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the UN is not interested in helping the Muslims in Bosnia, otherwise it would have done something to stop the Serbs from advancing towards Gorazde. Instead, the UN evacuated its people from the area, leaving the Muslims behind without weapons to defend themselves.

Asked about Malaysian forces serving with the UN in Bosnia, Dr Mahathir said he is worried that they do not have enough weapons as their stated duty is only that of a peacekeeping force.

"But if the soldiers are trapped, I am worried that the UN soldiers may not come to their aid the way they did not help the Bosnians," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia cannot call back its forces as that would be following in the footsteps of the UN. "We realise the danger to our soldiers, but we cannot allow the Bosnians to be killed by the Serbs, just like that. If we are attacked by the Serbs, we will defend ourselves to the best of our ability.

"We may not preach about justice but we are prepared to take action, unlike others who preach about justice and human rights but when

□ See Back Page, Col. 6

Malaysia has lost faith in UN ability to help the weak

□ FROM PAGE ONE

people are killed in front of them, they do nothing. What kind of human is this?"

Dr Mahathir said he had received a letter from Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic asking for Malaysia's assistance, but added that the country's ability to help is limited.

"We are ready if the UN wants to attack the Serbs, and hope that they will give us enough weapons. But they (the UN) have no intention of helping the Bosnians.

"The best thing to do is to give weapons to the Bosnians to defend themselves, which is their right. But neither weapon nor help is given. They might as well capture the Bosnians, tie them up and surrender them to the Serbs to be killed. It is the

same," he added.

Asked if Malaysia will review its position in the UN, he said: "At this time, there is no suggestion to review our position in the UN, but we are very disappointed with the UN."

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the attack on Gorazde is a clear signal of negligence and apathy on the part of not only the UN but also the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) and Western forces, which have been making all kinds of pronouncement on human rights and democracy.

"Malaysia regrets what's happening in Gorazde, which clearly shows the callousness of Nato and the West. It also indicates UN's inability to save the Bosni-

ans from being attacked and assaulted by the Serbs.

"We urge that sterner action be taken based on justice and humanitarian consideration," Anwar said after launching a low-cost housing project in Sungai Buluh, Selangor yesterday.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak said Malaysia is appalled by the UN, Nato and Russia's indecisiveness to intervene in the war in Bosnia. "They dealt decisively in the Gulf. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, they have been pathetic."

He said the Serbs will continue to test the resolve of the UN and Nato. He added that Malaysia has no plans to pull out its 1,500 peacekeeping troops serving under the UN Tions Protection Force in Bosnia.