

PM writes to UN chief and Clinton

By Farush Khan and Alex Choong

RAWANG, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has written to United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and US President Bill Clinton asking them to take steps to arm the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina with more effective weapons.

The Prime Minister said he had also written to the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Turkey requesting them to send troops to the former Yugoslavia as soon as possible.

He said the letters were sent today.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after opening an oleochemical plant near here. He was

asked on the latest action taken by Malaysia to ensure firmer action to help resolve the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The 15,000 troops under the UN peacekeeping forces now stationed in the war-torn country are lightly armed and are vulnerable to retaliation by the Serbs.

If the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation proceeds with its air strikes, the peacekeeping forces may have to defend themselves from Serb attacks.

Malaysia has 1,500 troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Asked to comment on Nato's warning to Serb forces that it would carry out air strikes, Dr Mahathir said he did not have much confidence in Nato's ability to carry out the warning.

Nato has said that it

would mount air strikes on the Serbs if they did not withdraw from Gorazde by tomorrow morning.

"I don't have much confidence. I'll only believe it if it actually takes place.

"There has been many ultimatums before, but they have never been followed with action."

It was reported that Nato had also demanded that the Serb army stop all attacks. If the Serbs fail to do so, "bombing could occur" within a 20km radius of the town.

Asked what would be Malaysia's next course of action should the Serb army ignore the ultimatum and Nato failed to carry out air strikes on the Serbs, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would follow the developments closely.

"We have to see what we can do...we have to look at the situation. I myself don't know what to do as yet," he said.

On whether the UN Secretary-General's post should be taken over by someone from a Muslim country, he said it was not important.

"We are not particular about religion as long as (the secretary-general) upholds the principle of humanity."

On Russia's call for an emergency meeting among UN members to resolve the Bosnian issue, Dr Mahathir said this was nothing new.

"There have been so many meetings, but people continue to be killed. What for?"

He also said Malaysia would not recall its troops from Bosnia.