

Give more firepower: PM

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By NIZAM ISA

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has called on the United Nations and the United States to provide more firepower to its 1,500 peacekeeping soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina in view of the uncertainties there.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he wrote to UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali and US President Bill Clinton yesterday requesting more effective weapons for the Malaysian peacekeepers.

The Prime Minister said he had also sent letters to his counterparts in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Turkey (members of the UN Security Council) urging them to send their ground troops to Bosnia as soon as possible.

"The Malaysian battalion needs more effective weapons than their light assault arms to face the escalating situation," he told reporters after opening the Palm-Oleo plant in Kundang Estate, about 30km from Rawang.

Dr Mahathir reiterated Malaysia's stand not to withdraw its troops from Bosnia and would obey any UN directive, although it had lost faith in the organisation.

He said Malaysia was also not confident that Nato would carry out air raids on the Serbian aggressors

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because the UN Security Council, Nato and the major powers did not have the will to take effective action to stop the aggression.

"They know the Serbs will ignore mere words (and verbal threats) and respect (only) forceful action but it looks like the UN is unwilling to do this," he said.

He added that the UN should at least allow the Bosnians to defend themselves.

"What kind of policy is it that is (sic) unwilling to help people and not allowing them to help themselves and even preventing them from defending themselves?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir noted that "this is an injustice which has never happened before in history."

Asked if Malaysia would seek a more significant role in choosing the UN secretary-general in future, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would try, although its influence was limited.

He also said Malaysia had not supported Boutros-Ghali's nomination as the UN secretary-general.