

Dr Mahathir: Aggressors must not be rewarded

From Zainon Ahmad

PARIS, Thurs. — Malaysia maintains that all attempts at settling the Bosnian conflict should observe the principle that aggressors must not be rewarded, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He told President Francois Mitterrand that a dangerous precedence might be in the making should the new European peace initiative on Bosnia give the Serbs legitimacy over territories they had taken by force.

During their one-hour meeting when the Prime Minister called on the French leader at the Elysee Palace yesterday, the two leaders agreed that reaching a settlement on the two-year conflict is not easy.

Other Malaysians present during the meeting were Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Ambassador Datuk Mahayuddin Abdul Rahman.

Briefing the Malaysian Press later, Abdullah said Mitterrand told Dr Mahathir that his country recognises "the importance of maintaining the unity of sovereign Bosnia."

France is a key country in the new peace initiative that offers the well-armed and well-supported Serbs 49 per cent of the war-torn country and the rest to the Bosnian Muslims and Croats. The Serb forces, however, now occupy about 70 per cent of Bosnia.

Dr Mahathir expressed the hope that France would continue to play a constructive role in Bosnia. He ap-

preciated France sending its peace keeping troops to Rwanda before the arrival of the UN forces.

Among the other international issues discussed was South Africa, from which Mitterrand had returned on the eve of Dr Mahathir's arrival. The two leaders agree that there should be an international effort to help South Africa.

On bilateral issues, the two leaders discussed the developments in their respective countries and hope that closer relations and wider co-operation could be established.

Mitterrand told Dr Mahathir that he admires Malaysia's prosperity and said that the country would not be what it is today if not for "the strength of its culture."

The Prime Minister said

Malaysia has already abandoned its tradition of sending most of its students to study in Britain and is now looking for more places for its young in educational institutions in France.

Mitterrand agreed with the suggestion that French educated Malaysians, because of their contacts with French students, could be advantageous to future closer links between the two countries.

The two leaders also discussed the proposal for co-operation between the two countries for joint investment in third countries and agreed that it would be of benefit to the people of Malaysia and France.

They also exchanged views on prospective third countries, besides Vietnam and South Africa.