

Hand weapons to Malbatt, UN urged

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the United Nations should hand over its weapons to the Malaysian Battalion (Malbatt) in Bosnia-Herzegovina if the world body decides to withdraw the UN Protection Force (Unprofor) from the war-torn country.

The Prime Minister said the Malaysian troops could then use the weapons to defend themselves as well as to protect the Bosnians.

"The weaponry of other contingents in Unprofor which was not used should also be given to the Turkish and Pakistani troops who were not given any aid from the UN," he told reporters after watching the special stage of the Petronas Rally of Malaysia 1994 at Tasik Perdana.

He said the UN and Nato

must equip the Bosnians with the same weapons that were being used by the Serbs so that they could defend themselves against the massive attacks.

He said the UN was talking about withdrawing even before the Bosnians could be equipped.

"This is similar to tying the hands of the Bosnians and allowing the Serbs to slaughter them.

"The UN attitude is similar to that in Rwanda where 500,000 have been murdered and the people there are left on their own to defend themselves," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malbatt would continue to defend the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina even if the United Nations and Nato (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) no longer wanted to shoulder the re-

sponsibility.

On establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would have to study whether this was possible in view of the policy and attitude of Israel, even though several Arab nations, including some Arab nations, had done so.

He said Malaysia was not satisfied with the treatment accorded to the Palestinian Government and its leader, Yasser Arafat.

"We believe Arafat should be accorded the treatment befitting a head of state but what is happening is that Israel is still in control of the area surrendered to the Palestinians.

"We hope Israel will change its policy and attitude towards Palestine," he said.

Meanwhile, the second batch of Malbatt soldiers

sent on a peacekeeping mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina under the United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor) returned home after serving eight months there.

The 309-strong team arrived at Penang's Bayan Lepas International Airport at 9.50am today on a United Nations chartered plane.

The men, including 12 officers, are from the 3rd Armour in Sungai Petani.

They were met by Brig-Jen Abdul Aziz Mansor of the 2nd Brigade and Brig-Gen Anwar Mat Amin of the 6th Brigade.

The men were whisked away in coaches to Sungai Petani, where they would be met by their families.

The remaining Malaysian army personnel in Bosnia-Herzegovina will arrive in two more batches on Aug 25 and 31.