

CNS1614

U GE 15-08 00174 EG787

aae

Mahathir-Bosnia

MALAYSIAN TROOPS HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN BOSNIA, SAYS PM

bm

194

(P)

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has the right to maintain its troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina even if the other countries want to withdraw their soldiers for fear of a total war in the former Yugoslav republic, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysia could not be denied the right to continue to remain in Bosnia-Herzegovina "even if the others want to leave".

"The only thing we fear is the inadequacy of the arms which our troops have," he told reporters after presenting the Malaysian skills award here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on a statement by a senior officer of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) that several countries were prepared to withdraw their peacekeepers from Bosnia in anticipation of total war in that country.

Malaysia has 1,500 soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina serving under the UNPROFOR. -- more

ES MGN

15/08/20-45MST

U GE 15-08 00185 EG788

aae

Mahathir-Bosnia 2 (last) Kuala Lumpur

"I feel that people who flee for fear they will get injured in a war should not in the first place talk of human rights and offer of assistance ... because if they withdraw, it only means that they are handing over the Bosnians (Muslims) to be butchered by the Serbs.

"This is their intention of threatening the Bosnians (Muslims) to submit to the demand of the Serbs ... that is why they are withdrawing when the Serbs attack," he said.

Asked about the UN proposal for Malaysia to buy heavy machinery from other countries to equip its soldiers in Bosnia and for the UN to reimburse Malaysia later, Dr Mahathir said it could be done if the UN actually wanted to reimburse.

He said there were member countries of the UN which had yet to pay their dues to the world body.

"These are countries purported to be rich but their dues to the UN have not been paid," he said. -- Bernama

ES MGN

15/08/20-56MST