

# PM: West only looking after own skin

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed disgust over the decision by the Western forces to only act against the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina if the United Nations Protection Forces (Unprofor) are attacked.

"However, if the Serbs attack the Bosnians or kill them right in front of their (Unprofor) eyes, they will not do anything.

"They are just looking after their own skin," Dr Mahathir told reporters after launching the *Malaysia Incorporated* book published by Limkokwing Integrated Sdn Bhd at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said this when asked whether he had been briefed by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on the outcome of the meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) contact group in Geneva.

Dr Mahathir said he had yet to meet Abdullah.

"I am frankly very disgusted to hear over the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) that the meeting in London decided that the Unprofor will only act against the Serbs if its forces are attacked."

The meeting in London last Friday was attended by 16 nations to discuss the Bosnia situation. They included the Governments of five big powers - the United States, Russia, France, Germany and Britain.

Later, speaking to reporters after chairing the Malaysian Business Council meeting here, Dr Mahathir, when asked whether he was bracing himself for possible economic sanctions by the West in retaliation against Malaysia's intention to sell arms to Bosnia-Herzegovina, said: "We have to face it."

He said these people always talked about human rights and accused Malaysia of the violation of human rights but could not see what was happening in front of their own eyes.

"I consider their actions as an attempt to help the Serbs to kill the Bosnians."

Earlier, asked whether Vietnam's entry into Asean would pose problems as it had a communist administration, Dr Mahathir said the grouping welcomed Vietnam's participation as its seventh member.

"This is because we feel that it is not necessary for us to question their system of government. The important thing is that they accept the free market system and they have done so now.

"Vietnam has the potential to become a developed nation among the Southeast Asian countries."

After three years of being an observer to the regional grouping, Vietnam is expected to be officially accepted as an Asean member during the Asean Foreign Ministers meeting in Brunei on Friday.

On whether any problem would arise due to Vietnam's communist administration, the Prime Minister said: "It will not pose a problem as Asean does not question Vietnam's internal affairs."

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"It is not a policy of Asean to question the internal systems of member nations," he added.

Asked about the territorial dispute over the Spratlys, Dr Mahathir said that everything could be discussed.

Tension mounted this year over the issue after China was alleged to have encroached into areas claimed by the Philippines.

Vietnam, Brunei, Taiwan, the Philippines, China and Malaysia are all staking a claim on the islands.

Asked whether the Government would seriously consider the proposals put forward by non-governmental organisations on the Bakun hydroelectric dam project, Dr Mahathir said: "Do you doubt our seriousness ... you keep on asking this question as if you do not believe we are serious".