

PM: Malaysia to give military aid to Bosnia

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By Manan Osman

IPOH, Sat. — Malaysia will play a major role in ensuring the success of the assistance mobilisation group (AMG) for Bosnia-Herzegovina set up by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We will provide all possible aid, including military assistance if necessary as we do not recognise the (weapons) embargo imposed by the United Nations on Bosnia," he said when asked to comment on the formation of the group after opening the MIC general assembly here today.

The resolution for the formation of the AMG was adopted at the OIC contact group and troops contributing countries to the United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor) meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

Its establishment is aimed at providing all forms of aid towards the peace settlement and reconstruction of Bosnia.

Asked to comment on the Nato air strikes on Serb positions, Dr Mahathir said it appeared to be quite effective as reports had stated that the Serbs had now agreed to withdraw their heavy weapons.

However, he said there was a suggestion that weapons belonging to the Bosnian Government be placed under Nato.

"If Bosnian Government weapons are placed under Nato, Serbs guns must also be put under Nato's supervision and not only be withdrawn," he said.

He said if the United Nations placed certain restrictions on Bosnia, it should also do so with the Serbs, otherwise it would not be fair although Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey said his country had agreed to the 49:51 division of territory.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the Serbs should not be given 49 per cent of Bosnia as it was just like awarding an aggressor.

He said Malaysia was still not satisfied but if Bosnia agreed there was nothing it could do.

Dr Mahathir said Sacirbey had some confidence in the US-backed peace plan, but he was still sceptical about the sincerity of the Serbs.

In Johor Baru, Foreign

Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Assistance Mobilisation Group (AMG) for Bosnia-Herzegovina, set up by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) yesterday, would be launched immediately following the formation of a working committee.

He said it was not decided whether the AMG — which was contained in the declaration adopted by the OIC Contact Group on Bosnia and troop contributing countries to the Unprofor in Kuala Lumpur — would be headed by Malaysia.

Abdullah said Malaysia was now helping to prepare the scope of duties accorded to AMG, its terms of reference and other details necessary for the group's immediate launching.

He said the Kuala Lumpur talks were called mainly to mobilise the AMG which would function as an action group to provide all forms of aid towards the peace settlement and reconstruction of Bosnia.

The AMG is made up of the eight-member Contact Group — Malaysia, Egypt, Iran, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Turkey together with Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia and Jordan.

Abdullah said this after officiating at the Segamat Umno division general meeting.

He said the peace negotiators in Geneva should not be fooled by the tactics of the Serbs who yesterday announced that they would withdraw their heavy guns from the siege of Sarajevo and redeploy them on the edge of a 20km wide exclusion zone around the Bosnian capital.

Abdullah added: "We hope Nato continues the bombardment of Serbian strongholds until there is no more military aggression from the Serbs against the Bosnians to stop the peace process from being achieved."

"Until the Serbs move all their heavy guns away from Bosnia we cannot consider the matter solved."

Abdullah said Malaysia hoped things would work out well for the Bosnians following the recent spate of positive developments — Nato's stern action of bombing Serb strongholds, with peace talks under way, and OIC's pressure on the relevant parties to speed up things.