

PM: Time to set-up a UN peace enforcement force

By G. Danapal

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today a United Nations Peace Enforcement Force should be set up if the world body is unable to protect the people from being victims of upheavals.

He said the Peace Enforcement Force was necessary to stop the occurrence of atrocities in a particular upheaval.

With the failure of the UN Protection Force (Unprofor) to halt the Bosnian Serb aggression against the Bosnian Muslims and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dr Mahathir said it was about time for the international community to review the UN peace operations there.

Describing Unprofor's failure to stop the atrocities in the worn-torn Balkan State as "a massive slap in the face for the UN peacekeeping operations", he said:

"It is no use sending a UN protection force if it does not protect the people as mandated."

The Prime Minister was opening the "Malaysia in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions Exhibition" at Muzium Negara.

The two-month exhibition traces Malaysia involvement in UN peacekeeping operations since the mission to Congo 35 years ago and is being held in conjunction with the UN 50th anniversary.

Dr Mahathir said since the peacekeeping mission to Congo, the Malaysian Armed Forces has been involved in 16 peacekeeping operations and the Police Force in six operations. These operations were in countries such as Angola, Cambodia, Iran, Iraq, Namibia, Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"We are still involved in six peacekeeping operations," he said, adding that

before completing the peacekeeping mission in Somalia early this year, Malaysia was the sixth largest troop contributing country among the 185-member world body.

As at May this year, a total of 14,092 Malaysian soldiers and 381 policemen had served in the UN peacekeeping operations, he added. Nine soldiers were killed in the course of their duty.

He said the members of the Armed Forces and Police had served as peacekeepers, observers and those who provided humanitarian aid to the victims trapped in upheavals.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia's involvement in the UN peacekeeping efforts was based on the principles of sovereignty of a country, justice and humanitarianism and was not motivated by religion and politics.

"Malaysia is committed to the principles and objectives of the world body in its

efforts, especially in preserving world peace and security.

"In this respect, Malaysia fully supports the UN peacekeeping operations because we believe we can help international efforts to seek a solution to world unrest," he said, adding Malaysia also contributed financially to the UN peacekeeping operations and it has never owed any money to the world body.

He made it clear the credibility of the UN peacekeeping operations must be restored by giving it the strength to halt the aggression occurring before its eyes, be it in Bosnia-Herzegovina or elsewhere.

He said peace which the world community had hoped for since the end of the Second World War was still a dream with conflicts still claiming millions of lives, human rights being violated, women raped and innocent children becoming

victims of the conflicts

On the contributions of the Malaysian soldiers and policemen in the UN peacekeeping operations, Dr Mahathir said their sacrifices were not only highly appreciated by the Government but also by the people in the countries they served.

Also present at the ceremony were Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar, Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad, members of the diplomatic corps and some of the Malaysian troops who had served in UN peacekeeping missions.

Dr Mahathir later toured the exhibition and took a short ride in a Condor armoured personnel carrier used by Malaysian troops in their peacekeeping missions.

The exhibition aims to pay tribute to Malaysian policemen and soldiers who served in UN peacekeeping operations.