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Mahathir-Malcon

MAHATHIR SAYS WEST'S RECOGNITION OF BOSNIA NOT SINCERE

By: Mokhtar Hussain

LIVNU (BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA), April 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed regret over the attitude of certain Western powers towards peace efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina some of whom feel they should not have recognised the country.

"Many of their leaders have told me that the mistake they made was to recognise Bosnia. According to them, if they had not accorded the recognition at an early stage, Bosnia would have been taken over by the Serbs now and there would no longer be any problems," the Prime Minister said.

He said this when he met members of the Malaysian contingent (Malcon) of the NATO-led Peace Implementation Force, here, about 200 km from Sarajevo, on Saturday afternoon.

Dr Mahathir said all this while the Western powers did not really wish to help the Bosnians but merely wanted to show to the world that they were doing something to resolve the conflict.

On the other hand, the Western powers had never said they made a mistake in recognising Croatia and Slovenia which are also involved in the Balkan conflict, he said.

"They actually only want to see Croatia and Slovenia become free nations and allow Bosnia to be destroyed by the Serbs," he added.

Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, who are on a visit to Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia, spent more than two hours with the Malaysian soldiers on their way from Sarajevo to Skopje in Macedonia.

They arrived at the military base here from Split on a Chinook aircraft belonging to the British army together with other members of their delegation.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is not helping the Bosnians just because they are Muslims but more because it respected human rights.

"We feel this time it is someone else's turn. Perhaps one day, it will be our turn and when we need the help, maybe we won't get the help of the people we had helped.

"But at least the world will know that we don't just know how to say we want to help but are also able to take meaningful action like sending our troops," he said.

The Prime Minister also expressed the fear of the possibility of the Peace Implementation Force not seizing weapons from the Serbs, allowing them to repeat their aggression against the Bosnians who are not armed.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had a long time ago written to world leaders like US President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister John Major and French President Jacques Chirac asking them to act swiftly to stop the Serbs from killing Bosnians.

"Unfortunately, they did not want to do so on the excuse that if they acted the situation will turn worse.

"But it's now clear that just some rocket attacks were enough to get the Serbs to surrender. The Serbs are actually not all that strong. It's just that they possess weapons that the Bosnians are not allowed to have," he said.

The Prime Minister also reminded the Malaysian soldiers in Bosnia to be conscious of the need to help Bosnians and ensure that they are not captured by the Serbs.

They should emulate the residents of Sarajevo who did not leave their

city despite coming under attack because they loved their country, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue sending its troops to Bosnia as long as they are needed by the Bosnian government, despite having to bear the expenses.

The Bosnian Federation is also keen to send its politicians to Malaysia to observe how a multi-racial population is able to live peacefully, he added.

Dr Mahathir was briefed by Malcon commander Kol Mohd Raih Ismail before he had lunch with the soldiers. Malaysia has about 1,600 soldiers in Bosnia.

Kol Mohd Raih said the Malaysian troops did not face any problem in carrying out their duties as the local population extended their cooperation.

He said that apart from patrolling, the Malaysian force was also involved in social work such as repairing roads and buildings and providing medical and dental services to the residents there. --BERNAMA

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