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Mahathir-Dragon

MALAYSIA OFFERS MAXIMUM HELP FOR BOSNIA

By: Mokhtar Hussain

SARAJEVO, April 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will help to the limit it can in the restoration of peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in its reconstruction.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said: "With the restoration of peace today and as the country begins its massive and difficult task of reconstruction, let me affirm Malaysia's continued support for and cooperation with Bosnia-Herzegovina. We will help you to the limit we can".

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the conferrment of the golden decoration of "The Dragon of Bosnia", the highest award of this country which was bestowed upon him by the Bosnia-Herzegovina government here.

"I accept the award with humility and in remembrance of those courageous men and women who had sacrificed in the defence of their beloved nation against brutal aggression and ethnic cleansing or genocide by the Serbs, as well as those who fought and spoke out for justice when there was only indecision and inaction on the part of the major powers," he said.

The Prime Minister also recalled with appreciation and gratitude the efforts by international peacekeepers and humanitarian workers who had served and contributed to the cause of peace in the Balkans.

"In addition, during the dark days of your isolation, some friends volunteered to join in your defence. Today you are being asked to renounce these friends in need by your new friends whose commitment you are not certain of. I do not envy your predicament," he said.

He added that the scars of the four-year war could be seen all over this capital city and "it fills me with great sadness to witness and observe the aftermath of such wanton and indiscriminate destruction and damage inflicted upon the innocent by the aggressors".

Dr Mahathir said: "I also accept the honour on behalf of the government of Malaysia as a special symbol of the friendship and brotherhood between Malaysians and the Bosnians."

The award is for foreign heads of government and special dignitaries for their merit in developing and strengthening peaceful and friendly relationships between the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries.

Among the world leaders who have received the award is Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir performed Friday prayers with President Alija Izetbegovic at Begova Mosque here. After the prayers, Dr Mahathir who is also the Home Minister, took time for a "ramah mesra" with Malaysian Civil Police (CIVPOL) serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In his speech, Izetbegovic said the award was an honour for Dr Mahathir and the people of Malaysia for all the help given to the Bosnian people.

He also said Dr Mahathir was an example of courage of a statesman in voicing out the plight of the Bosnian people in the international arena.

The Bosnian president expressed hope that Malaysia would continue the strong support for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Also present at the investiture ceremony were Datin Seri Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Bosnian leaders. -- BERNAMA

MOK AO