

11 APR 1996

Mahathir-award

"THE DRAGON OF BOSNIA" AWARD FOR DR MAHATHIR

By: Mokhtar Hussain

KUALA LUMPUR, April 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who will be visiting three Balkan states next week will receive Bosnia-Herzegovina's highest award, the golden decoration of "The Dragon of Bosnia".

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to be presented with the award at a ceremony at the president's office in Sarajevo. The award is only given to 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.

According to a Wisma Putra official today, the award is named after a 19th century Bosnian fighter, Capt Husein Gradasecevic, known as "Dragon of Bosnia".

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

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that although the prime minister's visit to Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia is to promote trade and investment, the visit to Bosnia is expected to be more of a mission to assist the country which has faced destruction as a result of the war which has stretched to almost five years.

"The visit reflects the commitment by Malaysia as a country truly committed and concerned over the fate of the Bosnians. We have not only showed our sympathy but also proved our commitment by our actions in extending contributions and despatching our troops there," he told media representatives who will be covering the Prime Minister's visit.

Dr Mahathir will visit Croatia on April 18-19, Bosnia-Herzegovina on April 19-20 and Macedonia April 20-21. He will be accompanied by 14 corporate figures led by Hicom Berhad Chairman Datuk Seri Yahaya Ahmad.

In Sarajevo, Dr Mahathir is expected to have a four-eyed meeting with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Hassan Muratovic. The discussion is expected to be centred on the role that could be played by Malaysia in the reconstruction of Bosnia.

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to present Malaysia's donations to the Bosnian government.

Dr Mahathir will also take advantage of the short visit to meet Malaysian troops and police personnel serving in Bosnia.

Two Protons will be on display during the visit following the Bosnian government's keenness to acquire the national car for use by the Nato-led peace Implementation Force (Ifor) and for tourism purposes.

In Croatia, the Prime Minister will hold discussions with his counterpart, Zlatko Matesa, and call on President Franjo Tudjman.

He will also launch the Malaysian Products Fair in Zagreb and witness the signing of joint-venture agreements and memoranda of understanding between Malaysian and Croatian firms.

In Macedonia, Dr Mahathir will hold formal talks with President Branko Crvenkovski and visit the Bazaar and the Mustapha Pasha Mosque in Skopje.

-- Bernama

MOK RM