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Mahathir-Bosnia

WESTERN POWERS TOLD TO STAND FIRM OVER BOSNIAN PEACE PROCESS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the western powers should stand firm in implementing the Dayton peace plan and not succumb to pressures from the Serbs.

The prime minister said the Serbs were now threatening not to comply with the peace plan after two Serbs were hauled up to face charges of suspected atrocities before the war crimes tribunal in The Hague, the Netherlands.

"My worry is that the western powers may not stand firm. From past experiences, they tend to give in to the Serbs but I hope this will not happen," he said.

He told reporters this after the simultaneous launch of the Global Humanitarian Appeal for Bosnia and Herzegovina over the Internet and a book entitled "Bosnia: Beyond Words, Beyond Tears", here.

The peace pact was reached in Dayton, Ohio, last November by the presidents of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, signalling the end of the three-and-a-half-year Balkan conflict.

Asked whether the world was doing enough to assist in the rehabilitation of Bosnia, he said: "I think so. The world is made up of different kinds of people.

"Some may not be very sympathetic, some may think that there are others who are suffering too. But I'm quite sure there are people who will respond (to the appeal)," he said.

He also said that some Malaysian businessmen were keen to go to Bosnia to see what could be done to help reconstruct the war-torn country.

"The government will leave it largely to the private sector. I think they will know how to go about it," he said, adding that the government would try to be as helpful as possible.

Asked whether a special appeal for funds for Bosnia and Herzegovina needed to be launched in the country, he said: "I don't think a special appeal needs to be launched at this moment." -- more

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the ethnic strife and sufferings in Bosnia and Herzegovina should not have taken place in a world where barbaric cruelty was universally condemned.

"The scale of these atrocities is frightening in an age when the slightest breach of democracy results in sanctions and threats and visitations by powerful fleets," he said.

The prime minister said leaders of powerful democracies dared not make the decision to act in accordance with their vaunted humanitarian principles, thus prolonging the war, for fear they might not be elected if their soldiers were harmed while defending others.

"Rather a thousand foreigners die than an election lost. That's the beauty of democracy," he added.

Some 50 million Internet users worldwide are now able to get the message of the appeal which also relates the background of the Bosnian conflict.

The book, "Bosnia: Beyond Words, Beyond Tears", an atmospheric pictorial of the effects of the war on the lives of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is co-authored by the chief executive officer of Limkokwing Integrated, Tan Sri Lim Kok Wing, and public relations and advertising expert Faridah Hameed.

The launch of the global appeal is made possible by Limkokwing

Integrated, the SungeiWay Group and Asia Connect Sdn Bhd. -- Bernama  
MAM JK