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Mahathir-Bosnia

MALAYSIA REMAINS COMMITTED TO ASSISTING BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight Malaysia remains committed to assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina and wants to develop a genuine partnership with the Balkan state.

He said Malaysia recognised that country's strength and potential and was optimistic that with a true commitment towards peace among all parties concerned, the Bosnian economy could be rebuilt and developed, its political structures put in place properly and the social fabric strengthened.

"We wish to work with you as you strive towards the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the reconstruction of the country," he said at a dinner in honour of the co-chairmen of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Boro Botic and Haris Silajdzic.

The prime minister said Malaysia had again committed US\$12 million (US\$1=RM2.6) for this year's reconstruction programmes for Bosnia and the modalities for the disbursement of the funds and projects to be implemented were under discussion.

He said Malaysia was also keen to work in Bosnia and Herzegovina with some other countries and had discussed the idea of launching tripartite or quadripartite efforts with a number of these countries.

"We feel that one way to accelerate the pace of reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to encourage a synergy of interests among many countries in specific projects," he said.

Over the years, Malaysian entrepreneurs had gained experience and expertise in many fields and they could share these and their resources with Bosnian entrepreneurs not only in Bosnia but also in Malaysia and in other countries, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia could be of help in certain areas including privatisation, trade and investment promotion and economic planning.

He said Malaysia was willing to share its experience in the development of small- and medium-scale industries and participate in infrastructure development and in the reconstruction of existing facilities and construction of new ones such as airports, highways and power plants.

Some Malaysian firms also had expertise in projects identified under the auspices of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), he said.

Although the volume of trade between the two countries was still very small it should not be a cause for discouragement, Dr Mahathir said, adding that there was scope for it to grow as Bosnia and Herzegovina built a broad industrial base based on its good technological know-how and highly skilled people.

"We hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will become one of Malaysia's strategic partners in southern Europe. We on the other hand can be an important conduit for your products to enter the wider East Asian market," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Malaysia's commitment towards the preservation and promotion of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained strong with the continual deployment of the Malaysian contingent serving with the Stabilisation Force (SFOR).

"Our troops will remain there as long as there is an international mandate for them to do so. The troops are there to nurture peace, not to serve sectional interests," he said. Malaysia shared the view of the

international community that peace must be safeguarded in the Balkan state and those indicted as war criminal had to be answerable for their actions, he added.

The peace that had been achieved must be nurtured to become a genuine and durable one, he said, adding that it was important to ensure that the horrors and atrocities seen during the war were not repeated.

Dr Mahathir said it might not be easy to forget those horrors and they should not be forgotten, but at the same time it was necessary to look forward in order to rebuild and to meet future challenges.

He said that from Malaysia's own experience, it knew that attention had always been paid to the delicate balance of the interests of all those people concerned.

"In our kind of society, the element of a healthy respect for others is vital. Tolerance, compromise, confidence-building, power-sharing, goodwill, cooperation and a good understanding of sensitivities are also important in our political culture," he said.

He added that those living in plural societies had very little choice but to live together, accommodate and respect each other and cooperate for the benefit of all.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had its own way of managing and overcoming the problems of a plural society and was willing to share its experience with others, including the Balkan state. -- BERNAMA

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