

28 AUG 1997

Abdullah-Bosnia

M'SIA HOPES BOSNIA WILL BE PEACEFUL AFTER WITHDRAWAL OF INTERNATIONAL FORCE

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysia hopes that peace will remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the withdrawal of the international peace-keeping force, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Abdullah said he told his British counterpart Robin Cook at their meeting here today that one must face the fact that the international force would withdraw from the former Yugoslavia one day.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) is scheduled to withdraw its troops from Bosnia and Herzegovina next June.

"We want to ensure that the situation we leave in Bosnia is more peaceful and able to guarantee that there will not be a repeat of the ethnic war," Abdullah told reporters after the meeting.

He said it was known that the military capabilities of the Serbs and Bosnians were unequal.

"We fear that when the international force is no longer there, the Serbs will take the opportunity to once again wipe out the Bosnians whom they hate," he said.

The three-and-a-half-year war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended with the signing of the Dayton Accord in December 1995.

Abdullah also said that Britain apparently had a very firm stand on the issue of bringing war criminals to justice and Cook had said that every effort must be made to bring them court for judgment.

He also told Cook that Malaysia was consulting other countries like Japan on efforts to re-construct the Balkan state.

Cook accepted the view that if Britain joined in this effort, it would mean that the responsibility and risks of re-constructing Bosnia was equally borne by all the countries involved, he said.

He also informed Cook of the serious view that Malaysia, especially Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, took of the speculative attacks on the currencies of several Asian countries.

"I told Cook that Dr Mahathir will continue to raise the matter at any international forum like the International Monetary Fund meeting in Hong Kong next month," he said.

Asked for Cook's reaction, he said Cook did not give any views but he understood the problem.

Abdullah also said that relations between the two countries at the ministerial and officials level would be stepped up. -- BERNAMA

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