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PM: We're committed to helping Bosnia

Sarban Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight said Malaysia remains committed to assisting Bosnia-Herzegovina and hopes to develop a genuine partnership with the country.

"We recognise your strength and potential," he said at a dinner held in honour of the co-chairmen of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Boro Bosic and Haris Silajdzic at Seri Perdana.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia wished to work together with Bosnia-Herzegovina towards the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord and the reconstruction of the country.

He added that if all parties concerned were committed to working for peace, Malaysia was confident the republic's economy could be rebuilt, its political structures put in place and the social fabric strengthened.

"Malaysia has again committed a sum of US\$12 million (RM31.25 million) for the 1997 reconstruction programme.

"In this regard, we hope to see more active participation by the private sectors from both countries, not only in those projects identified by us but in other projects, including those funded by others," he said.

He said Malaysia could assist in certain areas, including privatisation, trade and investment promotion and economic planning.

Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said, was willing to share its experience in the development of small- and medium-scale industries and participate in infrastructure development.

These include the reconstruction of existing facilities and construction of new ones.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was also keen to work with other like-minded countries and had discussed the idea of launching tripartite or quadripartite efforts with some of them.

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

"Over the years, Malaysian entrepreneurs have gained experience in many fields and they feel they can share their expertise with Bosnian entrepreneurs not only in Bosnia but in Malaysia and other countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the fact that the volume of trade between both countries was still very small should not be a cause for discouragement.

"It is our hope that Bosnia-Herzegovina 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 said Malaysia's commitment to the preservation and promotion of peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina also remained strong.

The continued deployment of the Malaysian contingent serving with the Stabilisation Force and its precursor, the Ifor, was evidence of this commitment.

"Our troops will remain there as long as there is an international mandate for them to do so," he said.

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