

25/06/1997

PM: Malaysia and Hungary can jointly help rebuild Bosnia-Herzegovina

Rashid Yusof in Budapest

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there is scope for joint Malaysian-Hungarian efforts in the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where its Government has invited Malaysia to help rebuild a number of sectors.

The Prime Minister said Hungary was located close to Bosnia and it had the manpower and necessary skills and qualifications to participate in the Balkan State's reconstruction.

"We have been offered several projects in Bosnia but have not concluded any contracts with them," Dr Mahathir said at a joint Press conference with his Hungarian counterpart, Gyula Horn, at the Parliament building.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a two-day working visit to Hungary, added that the financing of these projects were also being looked into.

He said the Bosnian Government had invited Malaysia to participate in such areas as airfield construction, communications and transportation, and this was being seriously looked into.

He added that Malaysia was involved in Bosnia-Herzegovina for quite some time and it was natural that it would want to take part in the reconstruction.

The Prime Minister spoke of the merits of Hungary, which was involved in the economies of its neighbours like Bosnia, as a natural gateway for Malaysian businesses to Eastern Europe.

He said Hungary had knowledge of and connections in the region and intended to join the European Union.

At the same time, Malaysia wished to increase trade and economic links with countries of Eastern Europe and intended to maximise the use of Hungary as a gateway to these regions, he said. "And we know Hungary quite well. We have established good relations with the Hungarian Government and the private sector ... it is natural for us to focus on Hungary as the gateway to Eastern Europe."

He said that Malaysia could also be the gateway for Hungary's exports to the Southeast Asian region.

On bilateral talks, he said there were many points of agreement and cited the memorandum of intent for the co-operation between the Multimedia Super Corridor and Hungary's Infopark.

Dr Mahathir was asked by Hungarian journalists to comment on a variety of topics including the MSC, Bosnia and Myanmar.

On the MSC, he said although many countries had plans for the information age, Malaysia's plan was the "broadest and most comprehensive of all".

On privatisation in Hungary, he said Malaysia was very familiar with privatisation, having successfully privatised more than 400 government entities. "We think we can participate in Hungary's privatisation, as we have done in many countries."

Navigation in the rivers was one of the areas being looked into by Malaysia, he said.

The Prime Minister later opened the International Commercial Bank, in which Malaysian investors hold a 60 per cent equity.

Apart from conventional facilities, ICB aims to facilitate multilateral trade and business between host countries and Malaysia, and the Southeast Asian region in general.

Also present were ICB chairman Robert Tan and its chief executive officer, Norhayateh Mat Din.

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