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Mahathir-Kosovo

MAHATHIR WARNS OF CATASTROPHE IN KOSOVO

KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has warned that continued aggressiveness and belligerence of the Serbian leadership in Belgrade can lead to a "colossal catastrophe" in Kosovo and the whole of the Balkans.

It would be a shame if the world allowed the situation in Kosovo to deteriorate further until it became another Bosnia-Herzegovina, he said.

Dr Mahathir's reminder was contained in a programme booklet of the "Consultation on Kosovo" forum opened by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim here today.

More than 200 diplomats, politicians, academicians, social activists and students are attending the two-day forum held at the Putra World Trade Centre.

"Whatever the merits or demerits of the struggle of the Albanians who constitute 90 per cent of the population of Kosovo, the response of the Serbian leadership has evoked the ire of the world," Dr Mahathir said.

Parties including the European Union, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the United Nations Security Council had all demanded that the Serbian leadership end the violence in Kosovo and start a dialogue with the legitimate leaders of the province, he said.

"As a democratic, multi-ethnic nation committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, Malaysia is also of the view that dialogue and negotiations are the most efficacious channels for defusing ethnic tensions," Dr Mahathir said.

In commending the International Movement for a Just World (Just) and the Institute for Policy Research (IKD) for organising the forum, Dr Mahathir said it would enable citizens' groups in this part of the world to voice their concern about current events in the Balkans.

He said citizens and governments all over the world should come together and speak up with one voice to avert yet another tragedy, this time in Kosovo.

The province was the scene of a recent crackdown by Yugoslav police against alleged separatists in which some 80 people were killed. -- BERNAMA

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