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Mahathir-OIC

DR MAHATHIR COMMENDS IRAN FOR UNSELFISH OIC

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

TEHRAN, Dec 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has commended Iran for hosting the current summit meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) here wisely and not using the forum for selfish ends.

He was very happy with the attendance of 26 heads of government at the summit which Iran hosted for the first time since the OIC was established in 1969.

The OIC has 55 members.

"Although people say that many countries would not come because of animosity with Iran we found that many turned up.

"Iran maintains a moderate stand and has not used this forum to attack anyone...it has served as a neutral chairman," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to Malaysian journalists at the guest villa here where he is staying during the summit.

Local news reports described the attendance by many OIC heads of government at this summit as a major achievement for Iran in enhancing foreign relations especially with its immediate neighbours.

The English-language "Tehran Times" and "Iran News" newspapers regarded the attendance of the heads of government at this summit as a blow to the United States which was out to block countries from having dealings with Iran.

Dr Mahathir said Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who opened the three-day meeting, had delivered a quite liberal and fair address.

"He also spoke in a neutral way about the problems of Iraqis who were once Iran's enemies as well as other problems," Dr Mahathir said.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir met Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, who said he looked forward to fostering closer ties between his country and Malaysia not only in religious field but also economically and in education.

Besides attending the summit, the prime minister also held bilateral talks with leaders of several other countries.

Today he met President of Iran's Expediency Council Ayatollah Akhbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Khamenei as well as three other African leaders namely presidents Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir (Sudan), Hassan Gouled Aptidon (Djibouti) and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah (Sierra Leone).

Later today Dr Mahathir was also scheduled to hold a dialogue with Iran's senior managers and academicians and witness an agreement signing between Technology Resources Industries Berhad (TRI) and the Telecom Company of Esfahan. -- BERNAMA

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