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Idea of OIC being given a UN seat worth studying: PM

Lokman Mansor in Teheran

TEHERAN, Thurs: Malaysia believes Iran's proposal that a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) be given a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council is worth studying.

There is no reason why the idea could not be carried out but the member nations must work out how to determine who should represent them, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said at a press conference today.

The proposal was made by Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in his inauguration speech at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit.

"It is practical. It depends on whether people are prepared to accept change. The UN was set up according to man-made laws, and not divine laws, so they can be changed. But the problem is if you say the OIC or developing countries should have a seat on the Security Council, you have to decide who should represent them," he said.

In his address when opening the summit on Tuesday, Khamenei had said that as representatives of more than one billion people and 55 countries, the OIC should become a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, meanwhile, in an early press conference, discounted the suggestion, saying the seats are not allocated along religious lines. He also pointed out that there had always been a Muslim country among the council's elected members.

Asked about the proposal for an Islamic common market, Dr Mahathir said while it is a good idea, implementing it may be a problem as Islamic nations are spread all over the world and different policies and practices are involved.

Even Asean's proposal to set up an Asean Free Trade Area has taken some time and the countries are close neighbours, he said.

"It will take many years to formulate common policies among all Islamic countries. The Group of Eight, or D-8, is a smaller group in the OIC.

"Perhaps it would be better if they were to start first and then later bring in other Muslim countries," he added.

Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Nigeria and Indonesia make up the D-8 developing Islamic countries.

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