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Mahathir-OIC

PERMANENT U.N. SEAT FOR MUSLIM COUNTRIES WORTH STUDYING

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

TEHRAN, Dec 11 (Bernama) -- The idea of getting a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) to occupy a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council is worth studying, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

The prime minister said he did not see why the proposal could not be carried out if some kind of agreement could be reached.

"It depends on whether people are prepared to accept change. The UN is set up by people and according to man-made laws, not divine laws. So we can change if we want to," he said at a press conference before leaving home for Kuala Lumpur after attending the OIC summit here.

"Of course there has always been this problem of who should become the permanent member if we decide among the Muslim countries that there must be a permanent seat," he added.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had said in his inaugural address of the summit on Tuesday that the 55-member OIC which represents more than a billion people in the world, should be allotted a permanent Security Council seat.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, at another press conference here today, however disagreed with the proposal, saying that the seats were not allocated on religious lines.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the proposal to set up an Islamic Common Market.

"An Islamic common market is a good idea but implementing it will be a big problem," he said.

Asean's proposal to set-up an Asean Free Trade Area (Afta) had taken some time despite the countries being close neighbours, he said.

"The Islamic nations are spread all over the world and we have different systems of governments, different policies on trade and investments.

"While I would say it can be done, it will take many years merely to achieve a common policy to facilitate the setting-up of a common market," he said.

He said it would perhaps be better for the group of eight countries (D8) within the OIC to set such a common market first.

"If they succeed then it can be spread to other Muslim countries," he added. -- BERNAMA

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