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Mahathir - nuclear

WHY THE FUSS OVER INDO-PAKI NUKES, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Michael Raj

TOKYO, June 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has admonished nuclear powers for making a big fuss over India and Pakistan's recent nuclear tests when they are oblivious to their own nuclear arsenal.

"I know there are countries with nuclear capabilities who have not really been slapped on the hand and yet they make a big show over the tests undertaken by the two South Asian countries.

"Let's apply sanctions to all nuclear countries," he said when asked to comment on Malaysia's position on the recent nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan at a question-and-answer session at the Nikkei International conference themed "The Future of Asia" here today.

He said Malaysia's position on nuclear weapons was very clear that it was against nuclear weapons no matter who holds them.

India tested five and Pakistan six nuclear devices last month, triggering worldwide condemnation and sanctions led by the United States and Japan.

It was the United States which introduced the world to the horrors of nuclear weapons when it dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War Two.

Japan, which saw thousands of its citizens of the two cities vapourised within seconds, has been at the forefront of promoting nuclear disarmament.

Dr Mahathir said: "We must do away with these horrendous weapons of mass destruction, but the world must get together on this."

France conducted tests in the South Pacific in 1995 and 1996.

Dr Mahathir said with such tests, others would be tempted to do so.

He said when India first tested its nuclear weapons in the middle of last month, "it does not take a genius to decide that Pakistan will follow suit".

"That's exactly what happened and I don't know who else will be tempted to follow," said the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir called on countries to spend less money developing so many sophisticated weapons.

In order to recover their costs, they kept on selling the weapons to "poor countries like Malaysia ", he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "When we don't buy, they say we will sell it to your neighbour and then we have to buy, otherwise we will be one down on our neighbour."

"So life is made so difficult by these great scientists who think up of tracer weapons and things like that," he said.

On a cynical note, Dr Mahathir pleaded: "Please keep to simple handguns. I think we can kill enough people with them."

-- BERNAMA

MR rn