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Dr M: Malaysia will play its part to achieve a united Muslim world

PETALING JAYA, Mon. - Malaysia wants to see unity among Muslim countries and will play its role to see its realisation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Muslim nations were too divided now that even sharing membership in the same organisation did not stop them from fighting with each other.

He felt unity would prevail if Muslim countries really practised the true teachings of the religion.

"Islam teaches its followers that all Muslims are brothers, yet Islamic countries are fighting among themselves.

"They even belong to the same organisation but it has not brought much help.

"Malaysia would like to see greater unity among Muslim countries, respecting each other and not accusing this or that country as being less Islamic," he said at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang.

The Prime Minister said this at a Press conference on his return from attending the G15 summit in Cairo.

He was asked on what he hoped to see from the 27th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers beginning tomorrow and hosted by Malaysia.

Emphasising that unity among Muslim countries was still low, Dr Mahathir said: "We are only good at talking like on Muslim brotherhood but act differently ... cakap tak serupa bikin."

On its part, he said Malaysia would work towards enhancing unity among Muslim countries.

"We are not siding with any country. We want to see unity in the Muslim world, at least in our quest for specific objectives."

On whether changes to the OIC should be carried out, Dr Mahathir said it would be meaningless if the attitude among member countries remained the same.

Dr Mahathir was also asked why Malaysia was planning to raise the issue on the world's financial system at the conference.

He said: "It is because OIC members are also involved.

"Many countries are being pressured by the International Monetary Fund which controls their finances like having to allow the entry of foreign banks.

"We found out that we are facing similar problems, in terms of attempts by the rich countries to exert control on us."

Asked for his view on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's desire to gain observer status in the OIC, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would "have to ask its friends".

Commenting on the release of one of the Pulau Sipadan hostages, Dr Mahathir said he hoped all captives would be released, and not just the Malaysians.

He said it would serve the cause of the rebels to release all captives, otherwise the world would think of them as a group of terrorists with no principles.

"I think they have achieved what they want to achieve, that is drawing attention to their struggles. It will be against their own interest to continue holding the hostages."

On the ransom reportedly demanded by the kidnappers, Dr Mahathir said it was not the Government's policy to entertain such a request.

Wildlife Department ranger Zulkarnain Hashim was released by the rebels who had been holding him and 20 other hostages on Jolo island in the Philippines.

They were taken captive at gunpoint from Pulau Sipadan on April 23.

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