

29 JUN 2000

OIC-Force

ISLAMIC COUNTRIES CAN BE A CHALLENGING FORCE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 29 (Bernama) -- There is no reason as to why Islamic nations could not collectively be a challenging force as they do not lack anything, being rich in resources, manpower, experience and know-how, said Aqeel A Al-Jassem, secretary-general of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

"We have countries from among the Islamic states, which are going forward by leaps and bounds. This very country, Malaysia, under the dynamic leadership of Dr Mahathir Mohamad is sparing no efforts for its economic development," he added.

Aqeel said this in his address at the opening of the Global Muslim Showcase 2000 Malaysia from June 29-July 2, held in conjunction with the 27th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) here.

He said at a time when global economics was moving towards an increasingly liberalised trade order, Islamic nations need to take stock of themselves and see how they stand in this rapidly developing trend of globalisation and trade liberalisation.

"We need to see, why and where our shortfalls are, what needs to be done to bring the Islamic World closer and how should it be done," he added.

The first step, he said was to have the will and sincere desire to synergize efforts for building and developing the Islamic Ummah and this should be followed by bridging the wide information gap existing among the Islamic countries.

Once the information on what each Islamic country had to offer and its needs, with regards to exports, imports, investments, transfer of technology, know-how and others were bridged, the countries would be in a better position to know that their needs could be fulfilled from within the Islamic world.

Currently, the Islamic market is said to be worth US\$1.3 billion daily.

And to reach to a desirable level of economic cooperation, Aqeel said the main vehicle was the private sector.

The ICCI is an affiliate of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) representing the private sector.

The ICCI has been holding its Private Sector Meetings annually since 1994 and Aqeel said the next seventh session in Doha, Qatar was important because another body affiliated to the OIC, Islamic Cooperation for Development of the Private Sector (ICD) would be there to help out businessmen "through a fruitful dialogue."

He said among the achievements through this private sector meetings was the US\$7 million Pakistan-Iran joint-venture power plant.

Others include agreements with Egypt and Iran on technical cooperation whereby funds contributed by both countries were used to train staff from the lesser developed Muslim countries.

Meanwhile the eighth Islamic trade fair would be held in conjunction with the Doha meeting this October.

Dr El hassane Hzaine, director of studies and training from the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade said the trade fair was to promote linkages between businesses apart from evaluating trade potential among Islamic countries.

He said among areas identified with vast potential for trade were the agro-elementary food product sector and halal product sector.

-- BERNAMA

SHO AAM