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Mahathir-OIC

MAHATHIR CALLS FOR REFORM OF THE OIC

By: Muin Abdul Majid

DOHA (Qatar), Nov 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called for a reform of the 56-member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) to strengthen its role particularly in meeting the challenges of peace and development.

He said sooner or later, the difficulties that would be faced by the OIC would compel it to redefine its structure and mechanism.

"To ensure that the OIC renews both its relevance and effectiveness, reform must be rooted in a new consensus among governments on the role of the OIC, its core functions, its priorities, what it can do best, what it should do with others and what it should leave others to do," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking on behalf of the Asian Group at the opening ceremony of the ninth OIC summit at the Sheraton Doha hotel, here, today.

The three-day leaders' gathering called the "Summit of Peace and Development" was opened by the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Dr Mahathir said the difficulties encountered by the Jeddah-based organisation in the past had, for the most part, been due to conflict of interests, ideology and the desire for hegemony by member states themselves.

He said peace and development were the twin challenges confronting the ummah and the two were complementary as without one, there could not be the other.

"This means that the OIC, established to promote Islamic unity and cooperation should take concerted efforts to promote peace and development," he said.

The body, he said, must ensure that a new culture of peace and development was propagated among member states and Muslims generally.

The OIC is a major forum for Islamic causes and solidarity. Malaysia is one of the 25 founding member countries of the OIC in 1969. Membership has since expanded to 56 and its previous focus on political issues has been stretched to cover economic cooperation.

Dr Mahathir said that today in the third millennium of the Christian era, Islamic civilisation was at its lowest ebb.

Muslims countries, he said, were generally caught in their own quagmires of abject poverty and internal violence with more intra Muslim conflicts within and between Muslim countries than there were between Muslims and their detractors.

He said the word "peace" appeared in 53 verses in the Al-Quran and it was uttered by Muslims from all walks of life from all over the world.

"It is therefore incumbent upon all Muslims to promote peace as a way of life in order to achieve development. Finding reasons for fighting each other and with others is not Islamic," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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