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Malaysia wants reformation of the OIC to play more effective role

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THERE was a clear tinge of sadness among Malaysians who were in Doha, Qatar, for the Organisation of Islamic Conference summit at the break of the sad news that Malaysia failed in its bid to host the Asian Games 2006.

To make it worse, they were in the very city which had won the bid to host the glamorous Games, watching enviously the Qataris celebrating their success.

Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was here for the three-day summit, did not hide his disappointment at Malaysia's failure when he asked those concerned to look into the reasons.

To him and to all Malaysians, the fact that the bid had been won by Qatar was quite a shock as Malaysia has the capability and experience to host the Games.

But as it has always been said, "you lose one doesn't mean you'll lose all.

Almost immediately after, it was made known in Doha that Malaysia had been given the honour to host the 10th OIC Summit in 2003.

In that "lose one, win one" atmosphere, the euphoria was indeed overwhelming that some reporters had almost jumped the gun, sending stories on Malaysia's selection as the next OIC host, only retracting them after realising that the Prime Minister was not too ready to pre-empt it until it was officially announced.

But what is certain is the confidence given to Malaysia by leaders of the 56 countries representing 1.2 billion Muslims all over the world to Malaysia to host a meeting of such a magnitude.

Their trust is also understandable as all this while - ever since OIC was formed in 1969 - Malaysia has been playing a meaningful role in the world's second biggest body after the United Nations.

And this meaningful role was of no exception in this particular summit.

What is exciting is the fact that the 10th OIC summit should have actually gone to an African state, but collective agreement turned the tables in Malaysia's favour. Senegal and Gambia, which have also entered the bid to host, have withdrawn.

Malaysia's sense of urgency and seriousness in the administration of the OIC were not merely words.

Its expression of sympathy was translated into action when at the closing of the summit, the country pledged RM3.8 million for the OIC administration fund.

Of course, oil-rich countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar made similar pledges. But Malaysia did not stop at that. It also offered to give medical treatment to Palestinians wounded in the intifada (uprising) against Isreal's aggression in our hospitals.

How many of these victims of Israeli atrocities will be treated in Malaysia is anybody's guess.

In the last seven weeks, over 200 innocent people, mostly Arab Palestinians, had been killed and many more maimed and injured.

Malaysia can be proud of the fact that a number of its proposals were taken into consideration for discussion at the summit and even recorded in the communique of the summit for further action.

One of the most significant proposals made by Malaysia was the need for reformation of the OIC in order to make the activities of the body more effective.

Malaysia has also expressed its readiness in participating in a proposed United Nations force pressed by the Palestinians to protect them against Israeli aggression.

In all fairness, a reformation of the OIC proposed by Malaysia is indeed urgently necessary, looking at the issues affecting the Muslim community and the unbearably long period it has to take to deal with.

Just in case the fact is forgotten, it is perhaps worth reminding one of the irony that the OIC was set up in 1969 following Palestinian-Israeli clashes after the Israelis attempted to burn the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. Today, after more than 30 years - Israel still arrogantly continues to occupy the Palestinian territories, amidst condemnation by world community.

Certainly an organisation as big as the OIC cannot sit on the sidelines and continue to see blatant acts of violence being committed on innocent people take place is open for debate.

Resolutions have been made and now it is the responsibility of the body to carry out the task entrusted on it effectively.

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