

13 OCT 2000

Indon-FDI

M'SIA CAN BECOME CATALYST FOR ISLAMIC ADVANCEMENT, SAYS INDON BODY

By: Openg Onn

JAKARTA, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- A Muslim voluntary organisation calling themselves the Fron Pembela Islam (FDI=Islamic Defenders Front) is convinced that Malaysia, which had succeeded in managing its economy and technological capabilities, can become a catalyst for Islamic renaissance in the region.

Its top leader Habib Rizieq Shihab said the renaissance would become a reality with the wealth possessed by Brunei and Indonesia which has the largest Muslim population in the world.

"If this is achieved, we don't have to worry about the strength of nations such as the United States and Europe," he said in an interview with a Malaysian correspondent here.

FDI, which is identified as a hardliner in propagating Islamic Law in the republic, was established on Aug 17, 1998 with thousands of followers.

FDI had attracted public interest since its inception and the latest was when the organisation, together with several other Islamic parties rose against the Israeli presence at the week-long conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which begins here on Sunday.

The Israeli delegation eventually aborted its plans to participate in the 104th conference.

Rizieq said Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei made up the Malay stock practising Islam and were held in high regard by the Arab nations.

He said the western world feared Islamic solidarity as it could pose a threat to their strength.

This was proven when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad proposed the establishment of the East Asia Economic Caucus and Asean currency, he said.

"We then detected the US fear and their endeavour to discredit Dr Mahathir," he said.

He said the US feared that the Islamic strength in south-east Asia could jeopardise their economy as well as political interest in the region.

--BERNAMA

opp AO