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OIC-Preview

OIC MEET SETS STAGE FOR COOPERATION TO DEAL WITH GLOBALISATION

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

KUALA LUMPUR, June 26 (Bernama) -- Fresh from a summit of developing countries in Egypt, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to further voice concern over unfettered globalisation at the opening of the 27th session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers' (ICFM) meeting here tomorrow.

Just as members of the Group of 15 Developing Countries (G15) had emerged with a better understanding on the negative effects of globalisation after their two-day deliberations in the ancient city of Cairo last week, the ICFM meeting could be another forum for developing countries to step up their cooperation in dealing with the issue.

"Many OIC countries are being pressured over finance, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) controlling their finances such as in Egypt where similar attempts have been made so that it would open up to foreign banks," the prime minister told reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang here this morning on his return from the Cairo summit.

He had spoken on the impact of globalisation on developing countries and related Malaysia's strategies in dealing with the Asian financial crisis during his meetings with the G15 leaders.

He also delivered a talk on the subject at Cairo University and explained the country's approach on the issue at a meeting with Malaysian students.

A senior Foreign Ministry official said today Dr Mahathir is expected to address the issue of globalisation and its impact on Muslims worldwide in his keynote address when he opens the four-day meeting.

"After all the theme of the conference is Islam and globalisation," he said as final touches for the opening ceremony were put in place at the Palace of the Golden Horses, a five-star hotel on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur.

The event will be carried live by local television stations. About 1,000 delegates from 56 OIC-member countries will attend the meeting, the second to be hosted by Malaysia.

Kuala Lumpur hosted the Fifth session in 1974.

The prime minister said in Cairo last week that although Malaysia had successfully overcome the regional financial crisis, the country would fight "tooth and nail" to defend itself from new global economic assaults created by the rich countries to enable them to have an edge over the poor.

At the airport this morning, he said Malaysia and other Islamic countries faced the same problems from the schemings of certain groups within powerful countries out to dominate their economy.

Malaysia is wary that democracy, the so-called free market, a world without borders, liberalism labour rights and child labour have all been cooked up in the rich countries and then forced on the poor.

"They all sound great but somehow their acceptance by the poor invariably destabilise them and put them at the mercy of the rich," the prime minister said in a highly-applauded speech at the Cairo University.

The Asian financial crisis had brought to the forefront the risks and challenges posed to developing countries particularly small open economies such as Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir is also expected to call for unity among the OIC-member countries especially in facing the challenges brought about by the information-technology age.

In this information age, where the powers of the Europeans and the Americans appeared formidable, developing countries should focus their energy on mastering modern knowledge, failing which they would be exposed

to domination by the superpowers.

Dr Mahathir said today Malaysia did not want to see allegations surfacing that one country was less Islamic or more Islamic than the other to the extent of causing one country to resort to political actions.

"Some countries despite being members of the same organisation had acted against others which in their view were not good enough, perhaps less Islamic than they themselves," he said.

He said unity among Muslim countries was still not strong even though they regarded themselves as Muslim brothers.

-- BERNAMA

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