

24 JUN 2000

ICFM-Syed Hamid (Renewal)

OIC MUST UNDERGO RENEWAL PROCESS TO SHED NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysia which will host the 27th session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers from Tuesday wants the secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) to be restructured for its revitalization.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today Malaysia wanted the OIC to be proactive in meeting the wishes of Islamic countries.

The OIC had to go through a renewal process to face globalisation and to correct the negative assumptions certain groups had of the organisation, he said.

The OIC, set up more than 30 years ago, should face the globalisation process of the 21st century with even greater wisdom, he said.

"This means we have to ascertain the role of the OIC and also as to what our role is and what is in store for our continued success," he said after presiding at a ceremony to strengthen links between the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture.

He said with the renewal process in mind, the Foreign Ministers would discuss a wide range of issues such as globalisation, a new international financial framework, networking in the trade system and the effects of advances in communication technology on the sovereignty of OIC member states.

These issues would be discussed based on the theme "Islam and Globalisation".

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open the 27th session of the ICFM to be attended by 1,000 delegates from OIC member states as well as its Secretary-General Dr Azeddine Laraki. Malaysia is hosting the meeting for the second time after having organised it also in 1974.

The OIC set up on in 1969 on the initiative of Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman has 56 member states and four others with observer status including Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Thailand.

"What is important is to bring honour to the OIC as a body of Islamic states able to play a role in the globalisation process with our own input."

"The OIC may be a failure in the perception of some but when we consider the issues carefully, it has brought benefits. It has succeeded in strengthening links among Islamic countries with different backgrounds."

"The organisation has also succeeded in imparting information on the systems that existed in the OIC countries and enhanced trade among them."

Syed Hamid said the OIC Secretariat was viewed as not being very effective or weak and this had to be rectified so that it could provide the best service to member states.

The OIC member states with their vast resources and large manpower could be a strong force through closer cooperation among them, he said.

Syed Hamid foresaw increased cooperation in fields of common interest but not in the area of politics.

"In the present world, the important things which should be studied are in the fields of economics and trade and the huge capacity in this area of OIC members."

He said the ICFM meeting would come up with many resolutions including on Iraq, the problems in Kashmir and the situation in Chechnya.

"The resolution on Chechnya will call for the OIC recognition of the sovereignty of Russia over the state of Chechnya but for the conflict there to be resolved through peaceful means," he said.

On the post of OIC secretary-general, Syed Hamid said Bangladesh, Turkey, and Morocco have indicated their interest to bid for the post which

will fall vacant next year.

However, he did not say which country Malaysia would support.

"Malaysia is bidding for the (OIC) assistant secretary-general's post," he added.

--BERNAMA

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