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Mahathir-Summit

OIC SUMMIT MORE LIVELY THIS TIME, SAYS PM

By: Muin Abdul Majid

DOHA (Qatar), Nov 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said that the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) this time appears to be more lively especially relating to the Palestinian issue on which Islamic leaders have been rather vocal in their speeches.

"They openly denounced the United States for instance, to the extent that some even proposed that diplomatic relations with the US be severed if it shifts its embassy from Tel Aviv to Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

"I am confident that if there is no response to this OIC stand, many of the OIC member countries will take action," he told Malaysian journalists covering his visit here in conjunction with the ninth OIC summit, last night.

He earlier attended a dinner hosted in his honour by Malaysians in Qatar at the Diplomatic Club, a short distance from the Doha Sheraton, the venue of the summit.

The Palestinians wish to set up a sovereign state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital and the recent statement by Washington, a strong ally of Israel, that it may shift its embassy in Tel Aviv was strongly condemned by various parties.

Dr Mahathir also said that the 56 OIC member countries appeared to be more united.

Asked on Malaysia's offer to host the 10th OIC summit in 2003, the prime minister said: "There seems to be quite a lot of support".

On Malaysia's call for a reform of the OIC, Dr Mahathir said bodies like the OIC had become too big that it was difficult to act effectively.

The prime minister said that he does not know the extent of the response of the Islamic countries as the matter had not been debated.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on his bilateral meetings with several Islamic leaders.

He said that Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade wanted Malaysia to be more active in its investments in the republic.

"He pointed out Senegal's potential including in the cotton (industry) and others," said Dr Mahathir.

President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir of Sudan also invited Malaysia to invest in a big hydroelectric project in Sudan.

"We are studying that," said the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said that the Sudanese leader also wanted to see Malaysia's participation in the transport sector.

He said Lebanese President Rafik Hariri proposed that direct flights be operated between Lebanon and Malaysia.

"He is also prepared to grant fifth freedom right to us to enable us to take passengers in Lebanon proceeding to other destinations," he said.

Lebanon, he said, also wish to have cooperation in other fields established between the two countries.

Dr Mahathir said Somalian President Abdi Kassim Salad informed him that his government had just been restored and wanted Malaysia to make investments in the republic.

Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia was also keen to further enhance Riyadh-Kuala Lumpur ties, said the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir will have several more meetings with Islamic leaders today before holding a media conference at 5pm local time (2200 MST).

He is scheduled to leave here for Brunei tonight to attend the Apec leaders' meeting.

The three-day summit ends tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

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