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OIC urged to discuss global financial structure

Hamisah Hamid

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) should deliberate on the formation of an international financial architecture as its member countries face the same problems from the attempt by certain parties to control their economies.

Dr Mahathir said most of the 56 OIC members, including Egypt, are being pressured financially as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) controls their finances.

"This includes Egypt, where the IMF is pressuring them to open up their market to foreign banks.

"So, we found out that we (OIC members) have the same problems in terms of the schemings by certain groups within powerful nations to dominate our economies," he told a news conference at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang yesterday.

The Prime Minister returned from Egypt yesterday after attending the G-15 summit.

Dr Mahathir was asked the reason why the issue of international financial architecture would be brought up in the 27th Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) meeting in Kuala Lumpur while the matter has already been raised at other global platforms such as the G-77 and G-15 meeting.

The Group of 77 leaders summit in Havana last April has among others, agreed on efforts to form an international financial architecture, including regulations on hedge funds activities and the setting up of an early warning system to assist countries facing financial crisis.

The international financial architecture is needed to ensure transparency and responsibility within the world bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF.

Although there is general world consensus on its formation, the new international financial architecture is yet to be seen.

On what is Malaysia's aspirations towards the ICFM session that starts today, Dr Mahathir said the country would like to see OIC members strengthening their unity and continuing to have respect for each other.

He said Malaysia does not want to see allegations that a country is less Islamic or more Islamic than the other where it can lead to the country resorting to political actions against the other.

The Prime Minister noted that the unity among Muslim countries is still not strong although they regarded themselves as Muslim brothers.

On whether the OIC Secretariat need to be restructured to bring about greater unity, he said: "That we do not know but we have to consider. Even after restructuring if the same attitude prevails, it will be of no use also."

Asked about Malaysia's stand on the OIC Secretary-General's post, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia does not favour any particular country.

He said Malaysia upholds the principle of Muslim brotherhood and wants Islamic countries to speak with one voice at least on achieving certain objectives.

On the request from the Southern Philippines' Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for an observer status in the OIC, he said: "That we have to ask our fellow OIC members."

Some 1,000 delegates from OIC-member countries will attend the four-day meeting, the second to be hosted by Malaysia.

Kuala Lumpur last staged the meeting in 1974.

The OIC, formed in 1969, consists of 56 member countries and four observer states including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Thailand.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about his private visit to Italy after the G-15 summit ended, where he said he met a few businessmen there.

"May be there will be some investment coming in from Italy later," he added.

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