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Syed Hamid-Iraq/BM

CONVENE EMERGENCY MEETING TO DISCUSS IRAQ ISSUE, M'SIA URGES OIC

KOTA TINGGI, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia today called on the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) to urgently convene an emergency meeting to discuss the United States' imminent attack on Iraq.

In making the call, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia would write in to OIC Secretary-General asking for the emergency meeting to be held immediately for Islamic countries to oppose the attack in a unified voice.

"I will send the letter to the OIC Secretary-General tomorrow. We (OIC member countries) must come out with one voice and our actions must be integrated," he told reporters after opening the Puteri Umno meeting of the Kota Tinggi Umno division.

Syed Hamid said so far the OIC had not called for an emergency meeting and it looked as though the OIC was waiting for others to take the initiative to voice their protests and opposition on the war against Iraq.

"This is the time for all OIC member states to issue clear statements on their respective stands and initiate diplomatic efforts and negotiations to avert a war on Iraq.

Asked whether Malaysia could take the initiative to call for an emergency OIC meeting, Syed Hamid said Malaysia cannot initiate the move because the chairman for the OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting and OIC Emergency Meeting was Sudan.

"For the OIC Summit, the chairman is Qatar and Qatar should play a lead role and take responsibility to gather the views of Islamic countries and the international community," he said.

Syed Hamid said the OIC should gather the stand of member countries and draw up an action plan on the Iraq issue so that it would not merely be an observer of a devastating war.

"I fear this will arouse anger and feelings of marginalisation among Muslims and even moderate Muslims will eventually be influenced and become extreme because their moderation was not reciprocated.

As such, he hoped the United States would reconsider its decision and impending actions against Iraq.

Foreign wire agencies reported that the US Congress had given President George W. Bush the mandate to strike Iraq.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday it was only a matter of time before the United States attacked Iraq.

Syed Hamid said he hoped the US would reconsider its planned action against Iraq as the war would have serious consequences on the world, especially Muslims who were already facing all sorts of atrocities like in Palestine.

"Malaysia will be very sad if a war breaks out not because we support any particular side but because we want and hope international justice will prevail," he said.

He said if the US legislative body had given a warning to the United Nations or the UN Security Council, it looks like the UN no longer had any credibility to act on the Iraq issue.

Being a superpower, the US should defend the UN's credibility and not threaten the world body, he said.

"They should give the UN a chance to make its decision and decide on the appropriate follow-up actions...the UN Secretary-General has a role to play in this matter, he said.

Syed Hamid said any action towards substituting the UN with the US, as a superpower, was not good for the world.

"Today's world is based on equality and sovereignty that must be respected regardless of how small a UN member country is, if not, UN will fail like the League of Nations, which lost its credibility, during the World War II and superpowers can take unilateral actions.

"Malaysia wants any decision taken must be based on the views of the international community, irrespective of how strong or weak the community is," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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