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Mahathir-Palestine

DR MAHATHIR SADDENED OVER CANCELLATION OF UN MISSION TO JENIN

KUALA LUMPUR, May 3 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said today he was saddened by the United Nations decision to cancel a fact finding mission to the Jenin refugee camp.

" I am saddened over the withdrawal of the UN as announced by (Secretary-General) Kofi Annan," he told a media conference after opening a seminar on ICT culture here.

The one-day seminar titled "Challenges of the K-Economy: The Role of Young Generation in Moving Towards ICT Culture" was organised by Umno Youth. It was attended by more than 800 people including university students and young entrepreneurs.

Annan yesterday announced that he was disbanding the mission after Israel refused to allow the team to come in.

Dr Mahathir said " If one country like Israel can defy the whole world then what is the use of the UN."

Asked whether the freeing of Palestine President Yasser Arafat by Israel after 150 days of captivity was a satisfactory move, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's stance was that there should be a UN presence in Palestine.

Apart from that Malaysia hoped Palestinians would not be harassed and those previously living in Israel could return to their homes, he said.

When Israel was founded in 1948, some 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their land and became refugees in Arab countries.

Dr Mahathir said action should also be taken to demolish the illegally constructed settlements in areas under Palestinian control and the people from these settlements should return to Israel.

On action that could be taken against Israel under the UN Charter, the Prime Minister said legal action could be taken if there was enforcement through the strength of countries which supported the UN.

"If the strongest country which supported the UN does not want to take action, indirectly Israel has power over that country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was important for Islamic countries to arrive at a consensus to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict.

"As long as they are disunited they cannot use the strength which they have to counter Israel's arrogance," he said.

He said even though Islamic countries held meetings on this issue not all attended.

" If we come up with an effective action, there are other Islamic countries which ensured that it failed," he said.

Asked whether the Palestine issue would be brought up in his meeting with US President George W.Bush in Washington during his three-day official visit from May 13, the Prime Minister said,"I do not know to what extent I can speak. In a way we will talk about it."

He said usually in his talks with other world leaders the time given was 45 minutes to an hour.

-- BERNAMA

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