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Mahathir-Kashmir

DR M RULES OUT MEDIATORY ROLE FOR M'SIA OVER KASHMIR

From Azman Ujang

ISLAMABAD, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has ruled out Malaysia playing a mediatory role to help resolve the protracted conflict over Kashmir between Pakistan and India.

He said Malaysia would stick to its known stance that the issue be resolved through United Nations Security Council resolutions.

"I don't fancy myself as a mediator at all. Malaysia is a small country; we don't have that much influence and we don't think we can change the minds of people," he told a joint press conference with Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf here last night.

The prime minister was responding to a suggestion from a Pakistani journalist that Malaysia, whom he called a "great" country, could be a mediator in the conflict.

Before Dr Mahathir answered the question, Musharraf chipped in: "I have warned Dr Mahathir that he cannot escape without talking on Kashmir in a forum in Pakistan."

"So we don't fancy mediating here. Besides, some countries believe that no third parties should be involved in this dispute...so we are not going to force ourselves on anyone," said Dr Mahathir.

He was also asked about his recent remarks in Kuala Lumpur that Muslim countries could use their oil to effectively promote their own interests.

The prime minister said he came out with such a view because many people were saying that the Muslim world was being oppressed and that Muslim nations were unable to do something about it themselves.

"I pointed out that they have in oil a weapon that can be very effective; if they combine with one another they will be able to control the supply of oil to the whole world."

He argued that in the days when the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) became more aggressive than it was now, it was able to raise the price of oil and was effective in shaping world opinion on certain issues.

"I'm not saying that we are trying to deprive the world of oil but we can be selective sometimes in the sale of oil of Muslim nations. The actual strategy can be worked out but the fact is that Muslim nations are producing most of the world's oil.

"If you are producing something so essential as oil we should be able to shape opinions in the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said both he and Musharraf agreed that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), which will hold their summit meetings in February and October next year respectively in Kuala Lumpur, should play a much more prominent role to have their voices heard in international affairs especially at this time.

-- BERNAMA

AU MFJ YBY