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Pakistan-Envoy

PAKISTAN HOPES MALAYSIA WILL CHAMPION THE CAUSE OF COMSTECH

KUALA LUMPUR, July 29 (Bernama) -- Pakistan hopes that Malaysia will champion the cause of Comstech, a ministerial committee of 57 Islamic countries including Malaysia aimed at developing various fields of science and technology (S&T) projects in Muslim nations.

Prof Dr Atta-ur-Rahman, special envoy of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, said today that Malaysia was regarded as a leading, modern and fast-developing country in the Islamic world.

"Musharaff is hoping that (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) will not only would champion this important cause but also persuade other Islamic leaders to join this group for a common reason," he told Bernama in an interview at the Pakistani High Commission, here.

Prof Atta-ur-Rahman, who is also Pakistani Minister for Science and Technology, arrived here yesterday. He handed a letter from Musharraf to Dr Mahathir at his office in Putrajaya this afternoon. He is scheduled to return home tonight.

He said that in the letter, Musharraf, who is chairman of Comstech, said that it was high time for the Islamic countries to join forces and pool their human resources and financial resources together towards the common objectives of setting up centres of excellence in different fields of S&T such as bio-sciences, biotechnology and information technology.

Musharraf also stressed the importance of establishing a large fund from member countries' contributions to finance S&T projects within the Islamic countries.

Prof Atta-ur-Rahman said the fund, mooted and agreed upon during Comstech general assembly in Pakistan last February, called for a contribution of 0.1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of each member country.

He said the fund could be used to draw out Muslim scientists and technologists now working in the United States and Europe to form groups of top-level scientists developing various S&T projects in Islamic countries.

"To do it individually we don't have the manpower..but through the fund we will be able to pull the best Muslim scientists to set up and develop world-class centres in science and technology such as biotechnology or IT (information technology," he added.

Prof Atta-ur-Rahman said that it was pointed out at the Comstech general assembly that Islamic countries were left behind despite having the resources because the key driver of the economy of a country was no longer natural resources.

He said the key driver of the economy of a country had become knowledge, investments and human resources, especially in S&T, which allow countries to invest in developing new products such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, machinery and biotechnology-based products.

Therefore, he said, Muslim countries should act fast by fusing together their human and financial resources in developing S&T.

This could be achieved if each of the Comstech member countries contributed to the proposed fund, he said, adding that Comstech was preparing a directory listing Muslim scientists from all over the world.

He said the development of S&T in Muslim countries was an integral aspect to boost the strength of the Muslims in the world because by and large, the Islamic countries were technologically weak.

-- BERNAMA

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