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PM: Oil can be used as a weapon

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MALACCA, Thurs. - Oil can be turned into an effective weapon and defence for the Islamic world, but the edge has not been exploited because Muslim oil producing countries are disunited, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said with Muslim countries being major producers, the commodity could be used to their advantage as oil was needed by the rest of the world.

But Dr Mahathir said this was not the case as the countries bickered among themselves.

"If they cut supply, then people will not be so oppressive against them. But they quarrel ...when one party wants to cut supply, another increases his and in the end, we cannot use oil as a weapon."

The Prime Minister said this at a Press conference after opening the third Malay and Islamic World Convention at Riviera Bay Resort.

He was elaborating on his remarks at a dialogue earlier where he said Muslims must have strategic programmes and plans in countering the oppression and challenges facing them.

Muslim countries were weak because they depended on non-Muslim nations for various things, he said, but added that the situation could be reversed if oil was made a weapon.

On the failure of Opec to use oil as a leverage, Dr Mahathir said some members of the organisation were non-Muslim countries.

"So, it is up to Muslim countries to do what they can."

On views that the United States was keen to invade Iraq so that it would have control over its oil reserves, Dr Mahathir said while it could not be denied that Iraq was an oil producing country, control of Afghanistan was more significant.

"This is because oil from Central Asia cannot reach the sea without passing through Afghanistan. That's why some say the enmity against the country is because it refused to allow the pipeline to be built through Afghanistan."

At the dialogue, a Singaporean Malay participant sought the Prime Minister's advice for the community in the republic.

Dr Mahathir said their situation came about because they were a minority but this should not stop them from striving for excellence in whatever fields they chose.

He said Malays in Malaysia should ponder the fate of their brothers in the city state, warning that it could happen to them if they failed to learn from history.

He said some quarters contended that Malays in Singapore were better off compared to Malays in Malaysia.

He said: "I do not know the basis being used but I would like to ask how many Malays in Singapore have been made generals in the army or chief secretaries of ministries."

On his comment that "might is right", hence Muslims must emerge stronger, Dr Mahathir said the Palestinians, who were robbed of their homeland, did nothing wrong but continued to be oppressed because they were weak.

He said the powerful would not be oppressed. For example, the West opposed communism but it made no attempt to oppress the communist bloc.

He said the solution rested in Muslim countries being less dependent on

powerful nations, which would inevitably set conditions and dictate terms for any assistance rendered.

"When we borrow, we are subject to their terms. There is no need for us to become superpowers but we should be less dependent on others."

To a suggestion that those oppressed would one day retaliate, Dr Mahathir said they did not have to resort to violence but instead free themselves by acquiring knowledge.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the Malays and Muslims were now under siege and oppressed not because of their wrongs but because they were weak.

In today's world where "might is right", he said power would legitimise everything.

"We can't hope for justice and sympathy from other people," he said.