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Mahathir-Nuclear

URGENT NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON NUCLEAR WEAPON  
NON-PROLIFERATION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there is an urgent need for an international dialogue to find an effective multilateral approach to achieve nuclear weapon non-proliferation and disarmament and avoid a downward spiral related to the issue.

The prime minister said that this was important now, especially when there was a propensity for some countries to unilaterally judge others as developing or harbouring intention to develop nuclear weapons without due regard to the findings of, or recourse to, the authority of the multilateral agencies empowered to make such judgment.

"We have seen how biased such a unilateral judgment can be. If a state developing such weapons is an ally, no action is taken to curb the development or possession or to institute nuclear control.

"If (it is) not an ally, the full military might and fury of those countries would be brought to bear upon the state concerned," he said when opening the international nuclear conference 2002 here.

Dr Mahathir said nations of the world should not be blinded by narrow national interests in pursuing such dialogue.

The prime minister said that as a result of a propensity to unilaterally act as an international prosecutor, judge and jury, there was now a threat for these countries to launch pre-emptive military strikes on the nuclear facilities of the alleged proliferating states, with the current war on terrorism serving as a convenient excuse.

"Such lack of clear moral standing between pushing for nuclear export control and striving for nuclear disarmament and also a propensity to unilaterally act as prosecutor, judge and jury and enforcer against others on non-proliferation matters will lead to a downward spiral, to the detriment of global nuclear non-proliferation objectives," he said.

He said the unilateral actions would not only cause more states to feel threatened. It could also lead to some in the threatened states to take matters into their own hands, by resorting to acts of terrorism and perhaps even nuclear terrorism.

"Even more dangerous is when the threatened states are those that are predominantly populated by people of a particular religious faith.

"This will lead to a perceived escalation in the victimisation of countries and people of that faith, following similar widespread perception in the context of the current global war on terrorism," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia, being a Muslim country adhering to the fundamental teachings of Islam, would pursue inter-faith dialogue to promote global peace and security, but the downward spiral on matters concerning nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament would undermine such efforts.

He said the rightful forum to provide avenue for the international dialogue, namely the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT) Review Conferences, had not done so.

Similarly, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva had been stalled by the reluctance of the nuclear weapon states and their nuclear-umbrella states to link the issue of developing a time-table for nuclear disarmament to, initially, that of banning nuclear weapon tests and, currently, that of cutting off the production of fissile nuclear material, he said.

Speaking at a news conference later, Dr Mahathir, who refused to name

the countries which he accused of being biased in their unilateral judgement, said: "I dont want to be specific, but one of the things that I do know is that there is no pressure on Israel to do away with their nuclear weapons, but there is so much pressure on other countries".

He said unilateral actions against Iraq, for example, were based on the possibility that the country was a nuclear proliferating state.

"If you attack a country because of possibilities, then every country is going to be attacked. They should attack Israel," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's allies were mainly people who wanted to see peace and who did not care for nuclear weapons.

Asked what he believes to be the causes of terrorism, he said they included the continued attacks on Palestine, the terror attacks against them (the US), their retaliation and the idea of invading Iraq.

Generally, he said, the attribute was Muslim countries, to the extent that even Saudi Arabia now wanted to impose reciprocal counter checks on countries which discriminate against them.

On Indonesian newspaper reports quoting some Indonesian Muslim leaders as claiming that the US was behind the recent bomb blasts in Bali, Dr Mahathir said he did not about it but maybe they had grounds to make such allegations.

On Indonesia's claim that the al-Qaeda network was involved in the incident, he said: "It would appear that each has differing opinions".

-- BERNAMA

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