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Mahathir-Oil

UNITE AND USE OIL AS "WEAPON", MAHATHIR TELLS MUSLIM COUNTRIES

By: Ahmad Fuad Yahya

MELAKA, Oct 3 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Muslim countries, especially those in Opec, not to quarrel among themselves but to unite and use oil as a "weapon" to defend the Ummah (community).

"Oil is the only thing that the Muslims have which is needed by the rest of the world," the prime minister said.

"They can determine the supply. If they cut back on the supply, then people will not be oppressive to them."

However, he lamented that the Muslim countries quarrel among themselves and in the process, become ineffective despite having power over oil.

"When one party wants to cut back the supply, another party will increase supply (either) legally or illegally."

"As a result, they cannot use oil as a weapon to defend the Muslims, he told a media conference after opening the third "Malay and Islamic World Convention" in Tanjung Keling here.

When asked whether the time was right for the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) to use oil as a weapon to defend the Muslims as he suggested, the prime minister said that Opec did not entirely consist of Muslim countries.

"There are a lot of non-Muslim countries involved with Opec. So, it is up to the Muslim countries to do what they can," he said.

Opec is an international organisation of 11 oil exporting countries which rely heavily on oil revenues for their income.

Its current members are Algeria, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Venezuela.

Opec members collectively supply about 40 per cent of the world's oil output and possess over three quarters of the world's total proven crude oil reserves.

Opec oil and energy ministers meet twice a year, or more if required, to decide on the organisation's output level and consider whether any action to adjust output is necessary, based on current and anticipated oil market developments.

Asked whether he agreed with the contention that US President George W. Bush's intention to invade Iraq has something to do with controlling oil supplies, Dr Mahathir said: "The fact is that Iraq is an oil producer but more importantly, I think it is Afghanistan."

Dr Mahathir said this is because oil from central Asia would not reach the sea without passing through Afghanistan.

"So there are some people who say that the reason for the enmity towards Afghanistan is because they refuse to allow the pipeline to be built through that country," he added.

-- BERNAMA

AFY MKO SD JK