

28 JAN 2003

Mahathir-Islam

M'SIA WILL PUSH FOR UNITY OF MUSLIM COUNTRIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that Malaysia will do whatever it can to get all Muslim countries to be united and brave enough to face any challenge.

He said as a Muslim nation, Malaysia would try to talk to other Islamic leaders and explain the need for them to take certain actions, even though it could not be certain that its views would be accepted.

"We think that some Muslim countries might take the lead in getting the Muslims together because at the moment they are very much threatened, they feel afraid of even speaking up," he said during an interview in the Asian Wall Street Journal programme aired over CNBC TV, tonight.

He said this when asked what kind of role Malaysia play to get Islamic countries such as Arab Saudi to lead other fellow nations.

Dr Mahathir fielded questions on a range of subjects including his retirement, Islam and his hopes for the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit next month and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit, as well as topics on political, security and international spheres.

On his advocacy that the root causes of problems especially pertaining to terrorism must be examined although the United States (US) media or government seemed to reject it, the Prime Minister said he was curious as to why people thought that a terrorist was a terrorist because he liked being one.

"I don't think anybody likes tying a bomb with shrapnels and blow himself up because he enjoys it. I don't think so, there must be a reason, a very strong reason for even young people to make that kind of decision to sacrifice himself. It is not a question of launching an attack from 300 miles away when you're safe and other chaps are going to be blasted, that's different," he said.

On a question that Islamic nations have no say in terms of persuading the United States to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict and on the issue of war against Iraq, Dr Mahathir said even Europe's views were not taken seriously by the US.

He said Malaysia, who will be hosting the NAM summit next month and OIC meeting in October, hoped that other Muslims would observe the country as an example of how Muslims could live together with non-Muslims without any problem.

Dr Mahathir said they should also look at how, as a Muslim country, Malaysia could be administered well enough in order to achieve progress and that Muslims could be fair to everyone.

"All these things are to be found in Malaysia, I think, to some degree. People may disagree of course, but at least we hope we can speak about it because many Muslim nations appear to be facing a lot of instability or there is a lot of rigidity in their community," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had also achieved stability to a greater degree than other countries, despite being a multi-racial country with diversity in religious beliefs.

"It is not the easiest thing to do in the multi-racial and multi-religion country but by comparison to most multi-racial and multi-religion country, we are doing much better.

"Even by comparison to some single ethnic countries, we are much more stable," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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