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Mahathir-Schroeder

DR MAHATHIR HOPES GERMANY WILL HELP RESTORE CONFIDENCE IN UN

PUTRAJAYA, May 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight called on Germany and other countries which still believe in the United Nations and international consensus to restore confidence in the world body and international law.

This was because when international law and conventions were ignored by the very people who formulated and promoted them, there would be international anarchy, the prime minister said.

"Weak countries cannot now be expected to submit to international law and conventions if their security is threatened," he said at a dinner in honour of German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, here.

Dr Mahathir said the small countries now lived in fear not only of terrorists but also from unilateral actions by powerful countries.

"We can expect no protection from international organisations like the United Nations (UN) since powerful countries like the United States and Britain can attack Iraq without the sanction of the UN," he said.

That was why the small countries like Malaysia were heartened by the principled stand of Germany and a few other European countries over the invasion of Iraq and the fact that they still believed in the UN and international law, he said.

Dr Mahathir also stressed that Malaysia believed that the present tension and turmoil in the world had their roots in the decision to expropriate Arab Palestinian territory to create the state of Israel.

"Ever since then, there has been no stability or peace in the Middle East. And now that instability had spilled over to every corner of the world. It is certainly the cause for the worldwide terrorism that we see today," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the world community should try to identify the causes of the Palestine-Israel conflict and to remove them.

"But instead, we see an attempt to out-terrorise the terrorists in order to deter them. Now countries are being threatened and invaded even though there is no proof of their involvement in terrorism," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the attack against Israel was seen by the Muslim world as an attempt to terrify the Muslim countries.

"But terrorists are not under the control of governments. Neither are they always in their own countries. They may be anywhere, in the UK, for example, and as desperate and angry people they will not be deterred.

"The war against terrorism will not be successful even if all the Muslim countries are subjugated. As fighters for freedom, they will physically oppose their colonisation."

On the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak which has created havoc on the economies of East Asia and the world, Dr Mahathir proposed the setting up of centres worldwide to respond quickly to new diseases.

It would be a good thing if a fraction of the funds expended for weapons development was reallocated for the setting up of such centres, he said.

He said the response of the world community to new diseases like Mad Cow disease, Ebola and Japanese Encephalitis had so far been haphazard.

"There is a real danger for these diseases and new ones to spread worldwide causing immeasurable damage.

"We can logically expect more new diseases to appear. The world needs

to formulate a strategy and to be well equipped to deal with these new diseases," he said.

Present were the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his wife, Datin Seri Endon Mahmood and other dignitaries.

Schroeder arrived here yesterday for a three-day visit on the first leg of a six-day four-nation Southeast Asian tour including Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Schroeder, in his speech, said Germany was confident that in future Malaysia would continue to contribute to stability in the region and take a decisive stand against terrorism and religious fanaticism.

"Your country can draw on its tradition of tolerance and harmonious diversity, thereby continuing to be an example for other multi-religious and multi-ethnic countries.

"This is the fundamental idea that we also want to be guided by on an international level," he said.

Schroeder also said that he was pleased to gain a first-hand impression of Malaysia.

"It was an exciting experience taking an elevator up the highest office towers in the world this noon. These towers are a symbol of the impressive development of your country. Success is, however, a long process that occasionally also includes setbacks, he said.

He said he wished that more Germans could enjoy the wonderful Malaysian hospitality that many holiday and business travellers experienced.

Schroeder said he was pleased that German companies had been able to contribute to Malaysia's impressive economic growth.

"The branch offices of German companies stand on a solid foundation here," he added.

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