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OIC-Media

JOURNALISTS SCORNFUL OF WESTERN MEDIA REPORTS OF PM'S SPEECH

By: Shakir Husain

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Journalists covering the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit here on Friday sharply criticised Western news organisations for provoking a controversy over Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the summit opening.

Quoting selectively from the speech on Thursday, the Western media presented the prime minister's comments as "anti-Jewish," leading to criticism in the US and Europe.

"It was an attempt to malign Dr Mahathir," Sheikh Manzoor Ahmed, a senior journalist with United News of India news agency said.

"He is a modern, broadminded and progressive leader, who has always spoken out against violence," Ahmed added.

Dr Mahathir told the summit, attended by 33 heads of state and government, that a few million Jews held sway over the affairs of many powerful countries while the world's 1.3 billion Muslims were humiliated and exploited by big powers.

"The Jews rule by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them," the prime minister said, explaining how they had survived and overcome centuries of persecution in Europe.

He exhorted the Muslims to become economically and technologically powerful if they were to live with dignity.

Al Jazeera Arabic TV channel reporter Shehata Awad said "this is not the first time" that the Western media had caused controversy about the leader of an Islamic nation.

"Whenever Islamic leaders and officials talk about the Jewish dominance of the world, the Western media distorts the message and spreads lies," he said, adding that "this reflects the Jewish lobby's control on the Western news organisations."

Even before the frenzy of criticism of the prime minister's speech could subside in Israel, Europe and the US, the Western newswires goofed up one more time by saying that Malaysia had "apologised" for the speech.

Responding to media questions over the controversy, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the speech should have been considered in its entirety and that it was regrettable that it was misinterpreted in some circles.

Western reporters promptly put out a news, which was later posted on many websites, that Malaysia was "sorry" for the prime minister's speech.

Private news agency United News of Bangladesh reporter Saiful Huda, who listened to Dr Mahathir's address, said "the spirit of the speech was not there" in the Western reports.

"They intentionally twisted the speech. It is a misinterpretation of facts and of what Mahathir said," she said.

Shushi Okazaki, a reporter with the Japanese newspaper Akahata, also disagreed with the way the speech was sensationalised in the United States, Israel and some European countries.

"The core idea of the speech is not anti-Jewish, but the need for Muslims to modernise themselves and become stronger. Mahathir used the comments about the Jews as an example so that the Muslims can realise their weaknesses," he said.

He said Western journalists had the tendency to "practise sensationalism" because "they just pick what suits them."

Yasuo Ogata, a Japanese parliament member attending the OIC Summit as a guest, described the conference as "very impressive."

He said the Western media does not like Mahathir's "ideas, philosophy and his outspokenness" in addressing issues.

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