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OIC-Hariri

MALAYSIA'S LEADERSHIP WILL PROPEL THE OIC, SAYS HARIRI

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's distinguished role in the world will lend prestige to the 57-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) under its leadership, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri said today.

He gave several reasons which he believed would enable Malaysia to play a constructive and productive role as the OIC chairman for the next three years.

"First, the successful political and economic experience of Malaysia makes it qualified to be a model for the Muslims and their countries.

"Second, the clear independence of the Malaysian foreign policy whereby Malaysia does not have a policy of joining axis, makes everyone listen to its opinion," he told Bernama in an e-mail reply in conjunction with the 10th OIC Summit here.

"The Islamic world which Malaysia will hold presidency over accounts for a quarter of the world population and occupies a strategic place in Asia and Africa and on the seas and oceans which link the world together.

"You can add to that the promising economies of these countries," said Hariri who will arrive here tomorrow for the summit, the first to be held in the Asia Pacific region since the OIC's inception in 1969.

Hariri said he was looking forward to meeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whom he described as "my brother", and the other Islamic leaders to discuss the situation in the Islamic World.

The two-day summit beginning Thursday, to be chaired by Dr Mahathir in this new Malaysian federal administrative capital, will draw the largest-ever participation from Muslim leaders.

"I expect this summit to be successful because of the seriousness of Malaysia in preparing for the summit and because of the important ideas that Prime Minister Dr Mahathir presented to make this summit a success," he said.

On the theme of the summit, "Knowledge and Morality for the Progress of the Ummah", Hariri said Malaysia, as summit host, had chosen to address directly the sensitive issues.

He said choosing "knowledge and morality" as the theme for the policies of the OIC countries in the coming years was correct.

"Nevertheless, it is important that this must not be taken to mean that what the Islamic world is facing is moral or cultural problems.

"The problems that we are facing are political, economic and organisational and the thread that ties all of them together is Progress," he said.

Asked how effective the OIC had been in meeting global challenges, Hariri said it depended on what was meant by success and effectiveness.

"If you mean regular meetings and consultations concerning the challenges that we face, we succeeded in that.

"We were sometimes able to be effective in solving conflicts and in unifying our positions in the international forums concerning certain problems.

"But if you mean transforming the OIC into a bloc similar to the European Union, with specific policies in economics and political issues, then we have not reached that yet," he said.

-- Bernama

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