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OIC-Belkeziz

MUSLIM NATIONS POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY WEAK, SAYS BELKEZIZ

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- The joint political action of the Muslim countries is so frail that it is incapable of giving them valour and potency, secretary-general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Dr Abdelouahed Belkeziz said today.

Their economic situation was no better, weak and fragile in the face of huge economic blocs all around them, he said.

"Yet we have not achieved a modicum of true economic coordination," he said at the opening of the Ministerial Preparatory Meeting for the 10th OIC Summit at the Putrajaya Convention Centre, here.

The two-day meeting, chaired by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, will finalise the agenda for the leaders summit on Thursday and Friday.

The summit is the first to be held in the Asia Pacific region since the inception of the 57-member organisation in 1969.

Belkeziz said that in their homes, Muslims were under trial as they were struck by helplessness and frustration.

"Before their eyes, one of their countries is being occupied, another one is under sanctions and all forms of restrictions, a third one is being threatened while yet another is accused of sponsoring terrorism and the like.

"Abroad, outside their homes, they are perceived with misgivings, made uncomfortable and denied their civil rights," he said.

On Saturday, when addressing the OIC Senior Officials Meeting, Belkeziz called for the eviction of all foreign forces from Iraq and for the United Nations to run Baghdad's affairs pending the restoration of the country's independence and reconstruction.

Today he again painted the difficult tasks ahead, saying that this summit was being held under circumstances that were fraught with challenges and dangers.

"So overwhelming are they that they are probably unequalled in contemporary Islamic history," he said.

Belkeziz said Islam itself, together with its civilisation, culture and message, was being accused whereas people had known Islam to be a religion of peace, tolerance and mutual acquaintance.

"Islam was and remains in the forefront of religions that accord prominence to human dignity, stress the sanctity of human life and encourage virtues and the highest of human values," he said.

He also touched on the situation in Iraq including the 20 years of tragedy and suffering by the Iraqis, which culminated in occupation and the loss of sovereignty and independence, as well as the long-standing Palestinian issues.

Belkeziz, whose term expires next year, thanked outgoing OIC chairman Qatar for discharging its responsibilities under extremely turbulent and difficult international conditions in the past three years.

The Iraqi issue is expected to dominate the talks apart from the concern over Israel's continued aggression against the Palestinians and its recent aerial attack on neighbouring Syria.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will chair the summit at the PCC, the new landmark in this Malaysian federal administrative capital.

-- BERNAMA

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