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Mahathir-Islam

MUSLIMS MUST UNITE TO BECOME A WORLD POWER, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, June 13 (Bernama) -- Based on the strength of the Muslim population which stands at more than one billion and endowed with an important natural resource such as oil and the available financial resources, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Muslim world can become a world power if they adopt a common stand.

Calling on Muslims to learn from the crisis in Iraq recently, the Prime Minister said disunity among the Muslim countries had weakened them and as a result Iraq and its people became the victim.

"Under the uncertain political situation in the world currently, it is wise and crucial for Muslim countries to unite and work together in facing current challenges," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this at a dinner at his official residence, Seri Perdana, in honour of his counterpart from Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is on a three-day visit to Malaysia beginning today.

He said the trend to wage war in resolving any international conflict was very dangerous for world security and stability, particularly to the small and weak nations.

He said the unilateral military action on Iraq in principle had challenged the integrity of the organisation which had been given the mandate by the international community to uphold universal justice -- the United Nations (UN)

-- which was now felt to have lost its bite.

This development, said Dr Mahathir, had created an element of uncertainty and instability in international relations, especially when the world was becoming unipolar now with the powerful oppressing the weak by force and ignoring international law.

"As such, it is important for Malaysia and Turkey to cooperate towards the objective of ensuring that the world is a safe place and stable for all people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the unilateral approach taken by one country against another sovereign nation on grounds of eliminating terrorist groups would not be able to resolve any problem.

This move, he said, would only cause more anger and extremism which could lead to terrorist attacks aimed at western interests.

Dr Mahathir repeated his call for terrorism to be tackled comprehensively by determining its root causes which included oppression, poverty, and unfair political, economic and social structures.

At the same time, he said that after Iraq had become the target and was now in a state of chaos due to the unilateral action, the international community should give immediate priority to the process of re-developing the country including assisting it to form a government chosen by the people of Iraq themselves.

He said as Turkey and Iraq were neighbours, Malaysia believed that the "prosper-thy-neighbour" concept was relevant to ensure continued prosperity and development in the interest of Iraq and the whole of West Asia.

"In this context, Malaysia is ready to cooperate with Turkey in the re-development of Iraq as long as the programme undertaken is under the auspices and supervision of the UN," he said.

Touching on the situation in Palestine, the Prime Minister urged the world community to condemn the continued violence by Israel in killing the

people of Palestine with total disregard for human rights and international law.

He said the success of the "road map" or latest peace plan in the troubled region was still not apparent.

Dr Mahathir said in fact, peace and prosperity in West Asia would only be achieved with the total withdrawal of the Israeli regime from areas it had occupied since 1967.

"In this context, the United States should take serious, fair and sincere measures to ensure the creation of a Palestinian nation that is independent and sovereign," he added.

In his reply, Erdogan said the main goal should be the realisation of a vision in which both Israel and Palestine existed side by side as two states within secure and recognised borders.

He also said that Turkey gave importance to all kinds of cooperation with its friends for combating international terrorism.

"No country can overcome this problem alone. International cooperation in this regard is a must," he added.

Touching on Iraq, he said as its neighbour, Turkey sincerely offered its hand of friendship and support to the Iraqi people.

"Our desire is that Iraq assumes its full sovereignty based on its national unity and territorial integrity as soon as possible. We should all help the Iraqi people in this period of transition," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM SHI AO