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Mahathir-US

MALAYSIA TO CONTINUE VOICING OPPOSITION TO WAR ON IRAQ

By: Azman Ujang

DAVOS, Jan 25 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will continue to voice its opposition to the United States' plans to attack Iraq although the superpower no longer cares about world opinion, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The United States had reached the stage of not only not supporting or paying heed to Malaysia's views on the question of Iraq but also the views of other countries which were against the war plans, he told Malaysian journalists here last night.

Dr Mahathir, who is here to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), said it was important for Malaysia to voice its opinion on something that it regards not right.

"We find that America no longer cares about world opinion but at least America is not going to war with the baseless belief that it is fighting for the world, for mankind.

"If no parties voice their negative opinions to America, then America will tell the world: We are waging war for the good of mankind, who is to say no?" he said.

He reiterated the statement he made at the plenary session of the WEF meeting last Thursday that in many matters the world was still not being managed properly, just like in the Stone Age.

Dr Mahathir said the world measured the power of a country not on the grounds of whether it was smart or had a good culture, understood what justice meant and could really build civilisation.

"Now we measure the greatness of a country according to its ability to kill; if it can kill the most, then it is the greatest, like the Stone Age of old.

"If a person has a very big club, others would not dare to fight with him and he becomes king.

"How far he has progressed, he hasn't progressed," he said.

The Prime Minister said that in several matters Britain and Australia were the only countries supporting the United States.

"We say when we believe something is not right, we have to say so," he said when asked why Malaysia was continuing to voice its opposition to the United States' war plans when the latter considers the views of other countries as no longer relevant.

Dr Mahathir said it was clear that even people in the West now realised that their trust in their institutions or government had deteriorated.

He said support for governments and institutions in the West was divided and sometimes the victory of parties forming the government was very small.

This differed from the situation in Malaysia where the government had repeatedly won with big majorities in elections, he said.

He said for example in an election where the voter turnout was only 25 percent and the majority was 13 percent, it meant that the government was formed with the support of only 13 percent of the people.

On the other hand, in Malaysia the voter turnout was 85 percent and if the winning party scored a big win it meant it had the support of a really big majority, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in the West the media played a very big role in shaping the minds of the people to support parties.

Due to the overwhelming media influence, the choice made might not be

wise because the media have their own agenda, especially in certain countries where a person can control so many newspapers, television stations and film companies and wield enormous influence.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that it was critical for problems like the Palestine issue to be resolved sincerely as the key to success in the war on terrorism, a menace which has caused the world to live in fear.

"We have to try and find peace by showing sincerity in wanting peace and problems like Palestine should be given attention," he said.

To a question on the apparent lack of seriousness and sincerity among the majority of Islamic countries in resolving the Palestine problem, he said Egypt and Syria had fought wars with Israel but they lost because Israel received support from Europe and America.

"That is why even if they help them it would not help because any effort by them would fail. That is why those fighting now are only the Palestinians.

"Because they cannot wage war the conventional way, they resort to terror means which we disagree with. But the fact is that they have no other way, so they use these tactics," he said.

He said as long as there was no solution to incidents of terror, the world would continue to live in fear because terrorists cannot be equated to a country and they could be anywhere.

"Terrorists can strike anywhere, including in the United States. So who are we going to fight with?" he said.

He said one might suddenly find one's neighbour crashing an aircraft into buildings.

"Terrorists do not wear uniforms; they dress like us," he said.

Asked on the fact that many Islamic countries still do not practise the democratic system of government, Dr Mahathir said democracy was not a religion but just a type of administration.

He said that in olden times there were other acceptable ways and the feudal system was regarded the best.

"Today, the accepted system is democracy but democracy is not perfect," he said.

"In Malaysia, we adhere to democracy, the populist system of support from the majority. For example, sometimes there is a request from a village or person who wants a contract; if we don't give they will not support us.

"So this is not a good thing which should be done by a democratic government but because they receive pressure it will be done," he said.

However, the Prime Minister said democracy without excesses was the best system of administration because the people could topple a government without a revolution by only voting it out.

But there were many more things not good about democracy, he said.

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