

17 OCT 2003

OIC-Jews (Syed Hamid)

NO APOLOGY FOR DR MAHATHIR'S REMARKS ON JEWS, SAYS SYED HAMID

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia did not apologise for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's remarks on the Jews at the summit of Islamic leaders here, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said he was taken out of context by The Associated Press this morning which reported that Malaysia had apologised over the remarks which Dr Mahathir made at the opening session of the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit.

Dr Mahathir had said: " Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them".

Dr Mahathir told the leaders from 57 Islamic nations that Muslims had achieved "nothing" in more than 50 years of fighting Israel and suggested the use of political and economic tactics, not violence.

Syed Hamid was quoted as telling the Associated Press this morning: "I'm sorry that they have misunderstood the whole thing. The intention is not to create controversy. His intention is to show that if you ponder and sit down to think, you can be powerful."

Asked later to clarify his own statement that led the Associated Press to conclude that Malaysia had apologised for the prime minister's remarks, Syed Hamid said he had been taken out of context and what was reported did not reflect what he meant and that it had been made to look like an apology.

"So, I said I am sorry it (the speech) has been misunderstood because the speech if you take one word out of context, it can mean so many things and I think this shows their real intention.

"They didn't want to understand the whole speech. The whole speech is a very balanced speech criticising the Muslims asking them to wake up and do something to change ourselves instead of being marginalised," Syed Hamid said.

Asked on a report in an Australian newspaper which likened Dr Mahathir to Osama bin Laden, who is blamed for the Sept 11 attacks in the United States, Syed Hamid said: " Whatever we do, they will misinterpret because they have got their own agenda."

"And I think it is very rude and ill-mannered for a paper in Australia to liken the PM to Osama bin Laden. Dr Mahathir is a man of peace who goes against violence and he believes that peace can only be achieved through negotiations," he added.

He said Dr Mahathir had never preached or supported suicide bombings or any acts of violence."

"So, I think we must be willing to accept criticisms, Malaysians and other Asean countries have been criticised...the Arabs have been criticised, everybody has been criticised. Why can't we give our opinion about a certain country," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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