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OIC-Analysis
OIC SUMMIT: GAINS FOR MALAYSIA, UMMAH

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PUTRAJAYA, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- The summit of Islamic leaders in Malaysia has put the spotlight on real issues facing the world's 1.3 billion Muslims.

Aspirations and concerns of the Ummah were articulately expressed in the declarations, resolutions and communiques at the end of the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit on Friday.

Even before the meetings of OIC senior officials began on Oct 11, it was expected that the OIC summit would go beyond perfunctory speeches and political discussions.

Since Malaysia is admired in much of the Islamic world for its industrialisation success, it was fitting that a conference of leading scientists from the OIC countries preceded the summit.

The Oct 7-10 science and technology conference in Kuala Lumpur called for substantial hike in spending on reserach and development in the Islamic world.

It urged the OIC members to pool their resources and create a fund for developing advanced industrial technologies.

Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf in an address to a business forum, the first such event held in conjunction with an OIC summit, spoke of poor economic progress in most Muslim countries.

"The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the entire Ummah is roughly \$1,400 billion while that of Japan alone is \$4,500 billion," Musharraf told the forum, which was attended by top business leaders and a number of Islamic heads of state.

The leaders of the 57-member organisation agreed that there was a need to increase intra-OIC trade and investment, exchange expertise and share experience in various fields.

Possessing one-fifth of the world's total land mass, 70 per cent of the global energy resources and accounting for 40 per cent of international raw material exports, the OIC's true developmental potential remains to be exploited.

The agenda for progress should be based on the OIC unity, equality, pro-business policies and democratic principles.

Malaysia has pledged that it will show leadership on these issues and seek co-operation of the member states.

"We commit ourselves and will together see through a new agenda for a more united Muslim Ummah and a more structured progress of raising the economic well-being of member states," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in his closing remarks.

One recurrent theme at the summit was revitalisation and restructuring of the OIC.

"It is vital that the OIC General Secretariat establish a mechanism for fully implementing the recommendations," Dr Mahathir said.

Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia and Pakistan are among the strongest proponents of reforms at the OIC so that the organisation could discard its image of a toothless tiger.

The Putrajaya Declaration calls for special attention to be given to science and technology, information and communication technologies in the Islamic world.

It calls for greater trade and economic cooperation within the OIC along with movement towards adopting the Malaysian initiative on gold-based

trade payment system.

The declaration fully adheres to the summit's theme of "Knowledge and Morality for the Unity, Dignity and Progress of the Ummah."

The summit also heard calls for greater participation of people in the affairs of the state.

In his opening speech Dr Mahathir said Muslim leaders should not enjoy power for themselves but make use of it judiciously, prudently and concertedly for "our people, the Ummah and Islam."

On the last day of the summit, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami expressed similar views, calling for the OIC members to practise democratic principles.

Israel and the Jewish control of the Western world's powerful countries has emerged as a real threat to many OIC members.

The OIC resolutions condemned Israeli military occupation of Palestinian lands and threats against Syria and Lebanon.

Enjoying US and European patronage, the Jewish state is seen as the single most potential source of violence and conflict. That there is something mafia-like about Zionism, the ideology behind the state of Israel, became apparent following reactions in the US, Europe and Australia to Dr Mahathir's speech in which he referred to the power wielded by a few million Jews in this world.

The criticism of the speech was due to Western media reports that twisted selected passages to make the Prime Minister's address look like an anti-Jewish tirade rather than what it was -- a call to Muslims to gain more influence in global affairs.

Giving vent to their propensity to sensationalism, those media groups were forced to climb aboard the petard of their own making on Friday.

They drew derision in the wider international media community and severe rebukes from Islamic leaders.

The undue controversy, however, failed to take the sheen away from the successful Islamic summit organised for the first time in the Asia Pacific region.

Malaysia's success in organising such a prestigious event won praise and due acknowledgement from several OIC leaders.

Gains have been made in raising higher Malaysia's standing in the Islamic world, but from now on its leadership would be put to test in realising the promises made at Putrajaya.

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