

21 JUN 2003
Mahathir-OIC
PM NOT KEEN ON OIC SEC-GEN POST

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has ruled out the possibility of him taking up the post of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) secretary-general once he steps down from all party and government posts in October.

"No. I'm not going to take any post, anywhere. But if I can be of any use with my views, I'm willing to give my views, that's all," the prime minister said at a media conference on the third and final day of the 54th Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether he would be interested to be a candidate for the post given his strong standing among Muslim and developing countries.

Earlier today, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said that several OIC countries had proposed that Malaysia nominate a candidate for the secretary-general's post which falls vacant next year.

The current OIC secretary-general, Dr Abdelouahed Belkeziz of Morocco, has held the post since 2001. Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj was the first OIC secretary-general, serving from 1971 to 1973.

Dr Mahathir was also queried over the reported distribution of copies of United States industrialist Henry Ford's anti-semitic book "The International Jew" to assembly delegates.

He responded by saying that he was not aware of the matter.

"I don't know. I'm not responsible for that distribution. If people want to publish and distribute it, that's their business," said the Umno president in his trademark blunt manner.

"People talk about free speech and all that. But when they see something they don't like, they would like us to restrain (such action)," he added.

Dr Mahathir's opening speech on Thursday, among others, touched on the role played by the Europeans in the setting up of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians.

-- BERNAMA
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