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Seeking views of members on change of name

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malaysia will seek the views of member countries on changing the name of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

"We want to know whether it is appropriate to change the name in line with needs and aspirations," he said.

Malaysia has assumed the chairmanship of the 57-member OIC for the next three years.

"This is a big grouping and there must be substance in the movement. Now it's called OIC, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference ... I think it's no longer suitable," he said after opening Cafe Desanie at the Malaysian Association of Youth Clubs building here.

"One approach is to get the views of the other members on whether we should change our name to take cognisance of the situation so as to show that it is really an organisation or network for co-operation and not just for holding conferences," he said.

This change was in line with the agreement of the OIC leaders to continue with the comprehensive study on the OIC secretariat as contained in the Putrajaya Declaration issued at the conclusion of the 10th OIC Summit in Putrajaya yesterday, he said.

He said the matter would be discussed at the OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Istanbul next year.

On the Putrajaya Declaration, he said its aim was also to forge a working relationship among member nations and beyond.

He expressed disappointment with some leaders in the European Union who criticised Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech as being anti-Jew.

"However, these leaders remain silent when Muslims are oppressed and displaced. Where is the justice?" he asked.

To a question, he did not rule out the possibility that the foreign media distorted Dr Mahathir's speech because they had their own agenda.

"They doctored his (PM's) statement to make him look he was against Jews but he was merely making an observation from a historical point," he said.

On reports in the Singapore media that the republic planned to refer the Tanjung Pagar issue to the International Court of Justice, he said Kuala Lumpur had received a note but he had yet to study it.

The issue revolves around the Malaysian Customs, immigration and quarantine facility at the KTMB station in Tanjung Pagar.

"It involves several questions of interpretation and agreement. We will study and respond to the matter later."

He said previously, Malaysia wanted to settle the issue as a package but both sides failed to come to an agreement.

"We will have to see whether it is appropriate to refer the matter to the ICJ or go for arbitration."

He said the letter seemed to imply what Malaysia wanted was based on Dr Mahathir's speech and Press statements.

"Our decision will not be based on what is in the note. We will obtain advice from our legal experts before making a decision," he said.