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Dr Mahathir's speech an eye-opener and wake-up call to unite, say leaders

OIC leaders and delegates yesterday described Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech as an eye-opener and a wake-up call for the ummah to unite.

They agreed that the thought-provoking speech, Dr Mahathir's first as the 10th OIC chairman, had clearly pin-pointed weaknesses of the Muslim community.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said the Prime Minister had stated clearly and eloquently the current situation facing the ummah.

He said it was an eye-opener for many, adding that this was what the summit was supposed to be.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said: "The speech is excellent. He touched on every aspect the Muslim ummah is going through."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Mahir likened the speech to a road map towards progress which should be seriously implemented by the Muslim world.

He said the Prime Minister had not only made a shrewd and deep assessment of the situation facing the Muslim world but had also spelt out measures to overcome the problems.

"He has mapped out an elaborate programme of action. I hope Islamic countries can follow the road map," he said.

On the Middle-East conflict, Ahmed put the blame on the collapse of peace talks on Israel, adding the Jewish State had thwarted every effort to bring both parties to the negotiating table.

"We see every effort made by country after country and organisations being frustrated by Israel," said Ahmed.

Israel, he added, should realise that violence and turbulence in the Middle East would not be beneficial to anyone.

Ahmed's deputy, Mohd Ezzeldin Abdel Monem, noted that Dr Mahathir had delivered a frank and courageous speech.

"It is admirable. It is a speech based on profound analysis and research."

He said Dr Mahathir was a good leader sensitive to the sentiments and aspirations of the people.

"His imprints will remain in the works and structure of OIC."

Palestine ambassador to Malaysia Ahmad Al-Farra said Dr Mahathir's call for unity should be supported.

"If we are weak, nobody will respect us. The world only respects the strong and powerful, and it does not pay heed to the weak," he said.

On the futile effort to liberate Palestine as mentioned by Dr Mahathir, Ahmad said they merely wanted a practical and just solution to the long-drawn crisis.

"We do not want war ... we want peace. We are calling on all parties to strive for peace."

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Dr Mahathir had outlined what has to be done by Muslim nations.

"He stated clearly that before pursuing anything, one should first think and strategise.

"This has to be done although it may cause us to be left behind. It will be worth the delay as long as we will emerge victorious in the end."

Najib said all Muslims should also ponder Dr Mahathir's call for wisdom in settling disputes and that one should not resort to revenge.

Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang praised the speech but was quick to add that the effectiveness of the summit remained to be seen.