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OIC can't prevent US attack, says PM

JITRA, Wed. - The Organisation of the Islamic Conference is unable to prevent an attack on Iraq because the movement is weak and its opinions not taken seriously by the United States, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Asked if Malaysia would discuss the Iraq question with other OIC members during the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Dr Mahathir said it was a welcome possibility, but he was sceptical of the United States taking such a meeting seriously.

Dr Mahathir said countries such as France, Germany and Belgium were more effective than the OIC in helping to prevent Iraq from being attacked, because their objections to war were backed by their own strengths.

"We find that the OIC has not taken any action to prevent war because the organisation itself is aware that it is weak. Therefore, the United States does not bother with whatever opinion the OIC expresses," he said.

"On the other hand, we find that France, Germany and Belgium are very strict in their stand opposing an attack on Iraq.

"This is because these countries are strong, maybe not like the United States, but still strong; so that is why it is very important for Muslims to strengthen their countries if they are to save their brethren," he said after attending a Hari Raya Aidiladha open house at Dewan Wawasan today.

Dr Mahathir hosted the open house in his capacity as Member of Parliament for Kubang Pasu.

The Prime Minister said this when asked whether he was satisfied with the role played by the OIC in preventing war in Iraq.

Dr Mahathir said Muslim countries were so weak that they did not even have any influence in determining the fate of the Muslim community.

On suggestions from some quarters for a jihad to protect Iraq, Dr Mahathir replied: "That's a stupid suggestion... for war we must have strategy, strength and the possibility of victory.

"In this case you already know you're going to lose, so you're going in just to release your anger by killing people, and instead of killing soldiers, you kill members of the public.

"I don't see any benefit in a jihad."

On the lessons Muslims in Malaysia should bear in mind during Hari Raya Aidiladha today, Dr Mahathir said it was significant how people in this country were able to celebrate festivals in peace when many Muslims in other places were being oppressed.

"In Palestine, Muslims are under the threat of being killed; even non-combatants, whose houses are being bulldozed and their children shot dead.

"We are sad because we cannot do anything to help them, so the least we can do is to be thankful that we live in peace."

Dr Mahathir said this also meant that Muslims in Malaysia should not do anything which would only weaken the Government, such as being involved in militant groups.

"Such actions would only invite involvement from foreign powers in the affairs of our country."