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Dr Mahathir to attend OIC summit in December

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has accepted an invitation to attend the eighth Organisation of Islamic Conference summit in Teheran in December.

Bername reports that Dr Mahathir gave the confirmation to Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Ali Akbar Velayati, who called on him at his office today. Ali Akbar handed over an invitation signed by Iranian President, Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"We have agreed that the agenda of the summit should be more practical," Velayati said after the meeting.

He said they also talked about the Islamic ummah and Islamic world as well as relations among Muslim countries.

Malaysia is the first stop in Ali Akbar's trip to the region to hand over the invitations for the summit.

From here, he will visit Indonesia and Brunei.

On the recently formed group comprising eight developing Muslim countries, D-8, Ali Akbar hoped that it would be close to the OIC.

He said the D-8, which was mostly economic oriented, has held two ministerial meetings in Turkey. A summit among leaders of the D-8 countries is to be held soon.

Earlier, Ali Akbar had a breakfast meeting with Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Hotel Istana.

Abdullah told reporters that Malaysia hopes the three major summits of leaders from Islamic countries scheduled for this year will improve political and economic co-operation.

He said these meetings should seek to resolve the political differences and conflicts which have undermined co-operation among member countries.

"We hope these summits will be productive and bring about greater progress for Islamic countries."

Besides the summit in Tehran, the Heads of State from OIC will be attending the extraordinary summit in Pakistan held in conjunction with the country's 50th independence anniversary on March 23 and the D-8 group summit.

The D-8 summit will involve Heads of State from eight developing Islamic countries to discuss efforts to promote development and co-operation among members which will serve as a model for OIC.

D-8 member countries are Malaysian, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The idea to set up the movement was proposed by Turkey's Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan.

Abdullah said senior officials from D-8 countries were working on the details of their co-operation to be submitted at the ministerial level and at the summit proper.

It was reported that areas of co-operation include trade and investment, human resource, science and technology, tourism and communications.

Abdullah also said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim would attend the OIC extraordinary summit in Pakistan.

Other issues discussed by the two Foreign Ministers during their 40-minute meeting were the conflicts in the Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Abdullah said they were concerned with the situation which was changing all the time and the prospect for peace remained difficult.

Iran, which has taken an initiative to end the conflict in Afghanistan, should continue with the effort until it succeeded, he added.

"It is a good initiative taken by Iran but it has yet to bear any results. But the situation in Afghanistan is not easy to resolve.

"Iran should continue with the initiative until it succeeds," he said.

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