

21 FEB 1998

HOWARD'S VISIT TO MALAYSIA CANCELLED

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Australian Prime Minister John Howard's three-day official visit to Malaysia beginning tomorrow has been cancelled, according to a Foreign Ministry statement here today.

No reason was given in the brief statement.

A Reuter report from Canberra said that Howard cancelled visits to Malaysia and Papua New Guinea because of the situation in Iraq.

Howard said he felt it would be better to remain in Australia until the exact situation in the Gulf became clear.

Howard was scheduled to arrive tomorrow evening for his first official visit to Malaysia since he took office in March 1996.

He was to have met his counterpart, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad again during his visit here.

The two leaders met shortly after Howard's election when Dr Mahathir made a stopover in Australia on his way home from New Zealand after attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. -- BERNAMA

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