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ICGM-Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN WANTS OIC MEMBERSHIP SUSPENSION LIFTED

By: R.Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, June 24 (Bernama) -- Afghanistan wants its membership suspension in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) lifted at the 27th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) beginning here Tuesday.

Its ambassador to Malaysia, Abdul Sattar Murad, said the lifting of the suspension would enable his government to present its case for a speedy solution to the protracted conflict in that country.

"We hope that the OIC (ICFM) meeting will restore the presently vacant seat of Afghanistan to the Rabbani government, the sole internationally recognised government and the genuine sovereign representative of independent Afghanistan," he told Bernama in an interview, here, recently.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open the ICFM. The four-day conference will also be attended by the OIC secretary-general Dr Azeddine Laraki.

About 1,000 delegates from OIC member countries will attend the meeting, the second to be hosted by Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur last hosted the meeting in 1974.

The OIC, formed in 1969, consists of 56 member countries and four observer states including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Thailand.

Afghanistan was suspended from the grouping at the 24th ICFM in Jakarta in December 1996, following the fall of Kabul to the Taliban.

Human tragedy has become a daily affair for the 16 million Afghan people following the Soviet invasion in 1979, which only ended in 1989.

Following that, a multi-party government was formed under Rabbani in 1992, but was ousted by the Taliban in September 1996, which then imposed strict traditional and tribal rules.

The Rabbani government, which until now is recognised by the United Nations, has accused foreign military and financial support for their ouster.

The Taliban, formed in 1994, is recognised only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Abdul Sattar said the OIC had the responsibility to take a serious note of the Afghan situation which he said not only threatened peace and