

Qatar agrees to informal OIC talks

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PUTRAJAYA: Qatar, the current chair of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), has agreed to Malaysia-initiated informal talks among OIC members on issues affecting the Muslim world.

The meeting will be held on the sidelines of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Kuala Lumpur next week.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir

Mohamad and the Amir of Qatar, Amir Hamad Khalifa Al-Thani, spoke about the matter on Monday.

"Qatar has agreed and they are supportive of the informal discussions," he said at Wisma Putra.

Syed Hamid said Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaseem Al-Thani telephoned him yesterday to express his country's support for the informal talks with the prospect of the US-led war against Iraq and the Israeli-Palestine conflict tak-

ing centre stage.

Qatar had initially disagreed with Malaysia's plan to call for the informal consultations on Feb 26.

He said Qatar had also sought Malaysia's support on the convening of an emergency OIC summit in Doha on a date to be decided later. Malaysia would support the summit.

The informal OIC talks will be chaired by Mahathir. Of the 114 NAM member countries, 50 are OIC nations.

Syed Hamid said the talks

would allow exchange of views and opinions towards a better understanding on current issues and addressing pressing matters concerning the Muslim community worldwide.

However, the discussions would be outside the ambit of the OIC charter and would not be in any position to come up with resolutions.

"It will be a pity if the war on Iraq takes place when the OIC has not even articulated its views (on the crisis)," he said.