

'Mahathir's presence needed at OIC meet'

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KUALA LUMPUR: With the imminent threat of war in Iraq, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's presence is needed at an emergency meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) next month.

Qatar, as the current OIC chairman, has invited Mahathir to attend the meeting on March 4 and 5.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday his Qatari counterpart, Ahmed Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, handed him the invitation during their meeting on Thursday at the sidelines of the 13th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Syed Hamid said he had informed Mahathir of the invitation but could not confirm yet whether the prime minister would attend the meeting in Doha.

"I have already informed the prime minister. However, he will be on leave then. I urged him to attend the meeting because many OIC countries have asked that he be present," Syed Hamid told a news conference after meeting with Ecuador's Foreign Minister Nina Pacari Vega here yesterday.

Mahathir is scheduled to begin two months' leave from March.

"We have no problem endorsing the proposed emergency meeting in Doha after the informal discussion in Kuala Lumpur. We have received a lot of support from OIC countries to hold the informal meeting. Most of them have asked the prime minister to attend," Syed Hamid said.

Malaysia viewed the informal meeting as an opportunity to exchange views and input on international issues, he said.



Kuala Lumpur