

17 FEB 2003

NAM-Arab League

ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT POSTPONED

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- The foreign ministers of the Arab League have failed to reach a consensus on the date for the Arab League summit, originally scheduled for the end of this month in Cairo, according to a report on the web site of the "Al-Jazeera" television station today.

The foreign ministers ended their meeting in the Egyptian capital yesterday with no decision on the date for the summit proposed by Egypt to discuss the Iraqi crisis.

Instead, they issued a statement calling on the Arab countries to take responsibility for safeguarding security and peace in Iraq and Kuwait.

The statement also stressed that any threat against any Arab country was a threat against all Arabs and no Arab country should provide any facility or help to the military campaign against Iraq.

Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa was quoted by the report as saying that the Arab League foreign ministers had agreed to give Egypt the mandate to decide on a new date for the summit.

The report also quoted an Arab League source as saying that the failure to set a date for the summit was due to disagreement over which party should be pressured to resolve the Iraqi crisis -- Baghdad or Washington.

One group felt that a strong message should be sent to Washington to show the opposition of the Arab countries to the United States' intention to attack Iraq and its policy, which favoured Israel. While the other group wanted pressure to be applied on Baghdad.

Earlier today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told reporters that the informal discussion of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur on Feb 26, would not clash with the proposed Arab League summit.

Dr Mahathir said this after witnessing the rehearsal for the opening of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit to be held at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here on Feb 20-25.

-- BERNAMA

MRH RT MAM JK