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NAM-Palestine

ARAFAT CANNOT COME TO KL AS NO GUARANTEE OF RETURN TO PALESTINE

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 19 (Bernama) -- Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will not attend the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit as Israel and its main ally, the United States, cannot guarantee his safe return, Palestine ambassador to Malaysia Ahmad Al-Farra said today.

"The Israeli government will not allow Arafat to come here. No one can (guarantee), except the United States," he said.

Al-Farra said Arafat was very keen to attend the NAM Summit, which starts tomorrow, but his coming to Kuala Lumpur was hampered by the uncertainties of his safe return to Palestine.

"We are appealing to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his capacity as the incoming chairman of NAM to do his best to contact the (George W.) Bush administration to get clarification (on Arafat's coming here and his safe return to Palestine)," he told reporters at the KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang today.

Al-Farra said Dr Mahathir had contacted the US State Department, urging them to give Arafat the right to return safely to Palestine after attending the NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur but until now there was no response from Washington.

"There is no information up till now regarding the issue although Dr Mahathir has done his best," he said.

Al-Farra said he spoke to Arafat over the telephone earlier today and the president was upset at not being able to attend the summit.

Palestine Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi will lead that country's delegation to the summit which ends on Feb 25.

Kaddoumi will be attending the NAM Ministerial Meeting on Saturday.

-- BERNAMA

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