

28 JAN 2003

NAM-Arafat

ARAFAT SHOULD BE GIVEN MOBILITY TO ATTEND NAM, SAYS SYED HAMID

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- The Tel Aviv regime should allow Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to attend the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Kuala Lumpur next month, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

He said it was important for Arafat or his representative to attend the NAM summit from Feb 20 to 25 as Palestine was a member country.

He said this at a press conference here after receiving 600 copies of book titled 'Kecemerlangan Di Sebalik Perjuangan Yang Belum Selesai' (Excellence Behind The Unfinished Struggles) from the Malaysian National Muslim Consumers Association, which would be given to NAM participants as a memento.

"I don't know whether he (Yasser Arafat) or his representative would be allowed or not to come. We cannot pressure a big power to do so," he said when asked to comment of the request by the Palestinian Ambassador to Malaysia Ahmad Al-Farra that Kuala Lumpur talk to the United States to pressure Israel to allow Arafat to attend NAM.

At a recent seminar held in United Kingdom, the Tel Aviv regime refused to allow Arafat or his representative to attend despite the call by British Prime Minister Tony Blair for Israel to grant mobility to Arafat.

Israel, which has occupied several towns and cities in the West Bank and Gaza, had imposed various levels of travel restrictions on Arafat and other Palestinians.

Commenting on the progress of NAM, he said all logistical aspects were in place and a series of dry-runs were being conducted.

He said a dry-run was held today for the opening ceremony and another three would be conducted before the actual day.

Syed Hamid would brief Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Saturday regarding the progress of preparation for the summit.

He said participants from more than 40 countries had confirmed their attendance and non-NAM members had also been invited as observers including the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Commonwealth.

-- BERNAMA

MFZ MUN AZZ AO