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OIC-meeting

DR MAHATHIR TO PROVIDE KL INPUTS FOR OIC SUMMIT

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

DOHA, March 4 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will provide inputs obtained from an informal gathering in Kuala Lumpur last week when the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meets here tomorrow for an extraordinary summit to discuss the Iraqi issue.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to brief the meeting on the OIC informal consultation held last Wednesday immediately after a highly successful Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit.

With growing international concern on the possible US-led attack on Iraq, Malaysia had initiated the informal meeting to take advantage of the large presence of OIC leaders at the NAM Summit.

The meeting attended by 51 OIC members had expressed the view that Iraq should not be invaded by foreign forces and urged Baghdad to comply fully with the United Nations (UN) disarmament demands to avert war.

It also reviewed the situation in Palestine -- a long-standing issue of concern for the OIC -- and agreed to continue finding ways and means to stop the killings of Palestinians by the Israelis.

"Dr Mahathir is expected to state Malaysia's stand that an attack against Iraq and the continued injustice of Palestinians will aggravate the anger among Muslims," said a Malaysian official.

The Prime Minister is also expected to highlight specific proposals identified during the informal consultation to strengthen solidarity and enhanced credibility of the 57-member OIC.

Dr Mahathir is also expected to underline Malaysia's stand in opposing the use of force as a means to settle conflict.

In the case of Iraq, Malaysia is against any form of aggression on the country to settle the conflict with or without the UN backing.

Although the number of leaders coming for the Doha meeting could not be officially determined, Dr Mahathir's presence reflected Malaysia's commitment in resolving the Iraqi issue and in the OIC affairs.

He had even decided to delay his leave to enable him to attend the summit. Malaysia would host the next OIC summit in October and take over its chairmanship for a three-year term from Qatar.

In the run-up to the OIC extraordinary summit tomorrow, Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) concluded a meeting here yesterday which reportedly had "strongly supported" a proposal by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein step down and go into exile to avoid a US-led attack on his country.

The idea had earlier been raised by UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan at a weekend Arab League summit in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

Going by reports in the local newspapers, UAE, which borders Qatar, was likely to repeat the proposal at the OIC extraordinary summit.

UAE Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah Al-Nuaimi was quoted as saying that the move was aimed at resolving the Iraqi crisis in a peaceful manner and should not be seen as interference in the Iraqi internal affairs.

Bordered by Saudi Arabia and UAE in the south and Bahrain in the northwest, Qatar, with a population of 600,000, is situated halfway on the western shore of the Arabian gulf.

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