

26 FEB 2003

OIC-Mahathir (UN)

DR MAHATHIR TO WRITE TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the new Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) chairman, will write to members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council asking them to avert an impending United States-led war on Iraq.

"I will certainly write, even in my own personal capacity as the prime minister. I have been writing to a lot of people to try to influence them. There is no harm in writing as chairman of NAM to the Security Council and its members," the prime minister said today.

Dr Mahathir assumed the chairmanship of the 116-member movement of developing countries from South African President Thabo Mbeki at the 13th edition of the NAM leaders meeting, which ended yesterday.

The UN Security Council's permanent members are France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States and China while the current non-permanent members are Germany, Guinea, Mexico, Pakistan, Spain, Syria, Angola, Bulgaria, Cameroon and Chile.

Speaking at a media conference after an informal meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) here, Dr Mahathir said that the OIC members "by and large agreed that we should try to influence as many people as possible (to stop the planned war on Iraq)".

Dr Mahathir said the OIC informal meeting, held a day after the conclusion of the NAM Summit, suggested that he write the letters in his capacity as the NAM chairman as well as chairman of the meeting.

"There was a suggestion that I write in my capacity as NAM chairman as well as chairman of the OIC informal meeting (and that) I write to the (UN) Security Council and its members as well as the European Union to urge them to help avoid the attack on Iraq," he said.

Forty-nine of the 50 OIC member states in NAM participated in the informal meeting. Two NAM members which are not OIC members also attended.

Dr Mahathir said that writing the letters was something that "we have to do" even if the letters could end up in the wastepaper basket.

"We don't know what they (Security Council members) are going to do (with the letter). Of course they may just throw it in the wastepaper basket or they may respond in some way, but I am sure that they are going to reassure us that they are doing the right thing."

The prime minister said that with the letter, "at least we will have some people who will speak up for us at the Security Council."

He said the letter would probably carry weight in their arguments because the OIC was a considerable group of countries, the views of which must be taken into consideration.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated that the NAM troika (the past, present and future chairmen of the movement) would not be sending a team to Baghdad as requested by Iraq to observe its compliance level with the UN resolution on disarmament.

On the revitalisation of NAM, he said that he had to study the position of the chairman and added that chairman was Malaysia and not himself personally.

-- BERNAMA

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