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OIC-Women

DR SITI HASMAH TO CHAIR OIC FIRST LADIES' DIALOGUE

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, the wife of Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, will chair the inaugural dialogue of the First Ladies of OIC member countries on Oct 17 here.

The First Ladies would exchange views and share their experiences at the dialogue being held in conjunction with the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit beginning here tomorrow at the ultra modern Putrajaya Convention Centre.

The dialogue, themed "Women: Peace and Development", organised by Malaysia's Women and Family Development Ministry, is the main itinerary for the wives of Heads of State and Government attending the summit.

Dr Siti Hasmah said the main objective of inviting the First Ladies was to gather their views about women in Islamic countries.

"We can get the information about them from the books we read but sometimes it is not their own views. It's better for us to know their views from them first hand," she told a media conference at "Seri Perdana", the official residence of the Prime Minister, here.

Among the First Ladies who have confirmed their attendance are Edith Lucie Bongo from Gabon, Gambia's Zineb Yahya Jameh, Sehba Musharraf of Pakistan, Sudan's Widad Babikir Omer and Semra Sezer of Turkey.

Dr Siti Hasmah said wives of foreign ministers and ministers of OIC countries, wives of Malaysian cabinet ministers, wives of heads of missions of OIC member states in Malaysia and local women personalities would also attend the dialogue.

She said Nane Annan, the wife of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, would also be present.

Among the topics to be discussed are education, women healthcare, poverty eradication and economic development, Science and Technology, HIV/AIDS and communicable diseases.

Involvement in society, peace proposals to avoid war and terrorism, policies and public institutions to support women and global participation, collaboration and networking among Muslim women would also be deliberated, she said.

Eleven experts have been invited to assist in the dialogue, she said.

"Findings of the deliberations will be forwarded to the OIC Chairman to be included in the OIC agenda on women affairs," she said.

Replying to a question, Dr Siti Hasmah said the idea to have a programme for First Ladies was mooted long ago.

"But what is more encouraging is a question posed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad by the daughter of the then Iranian President Ali Akhbar Hashemi Rafsanjani at the last OIC Summit in Doha, Qatar," she said.

Ali Akbar's daughter had asked Dr Mahathir why the women agenda was not included at the Doha summit and then she came to know Malaysia would host the next OIC Summit.

Dr Siti Hasmah said the women agenda was not included based on the established procedures of the OIC since its inception in 1969.

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