

21 MAR 2003

Envoy-Thanks

IRAQI ENVOY GRATEFUL TO M'SIANS FOR SUPPORT

PUTRAJAYA, March 21 (Bernama) -- Iraqi Ambassador to Malaysia Qais Subhi Al-Yacoubi today conveyed his gratitude to the Malaysian government and the people for their continuous support to Iraq and Iraqis in facing the war launched by the United States and its allies.

He thanked Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the stand adopted, especially at last month's 13th Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Malaysia and the informal discussion on Iraq in Kuala Lumpur and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Emergency Meeting in Doha, Qatar.

The support from Dr Mahathir, the Malaysian government and the people for Iraq and the Iraqi people in this critical time are very much appreciated, he told reporters after calling on Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin.

Al-Yacoubi said the NAM Summit was a good channel to show and express loudly and clearly the unjust and cruel campaign on the war.

"I would like to say again that the NAM summit was really something encouraging. NAM was a good channel to prove to the people of the world that NAM member countries are peace lovers," he said.

On reports that the US would call for the closure of Iraqi embassies around the world in anticipation of the fall of Saddam Hussein's government, Al-Yacoubi said there was no reason for such calls unless it came from the host country itself.

He said the decision whether Iraqi ambassadors should leave the country or close the embassy must come from the host country.

"This is up to the host country. We are accredited to the host government. It is not the duty of the Iraqi diplomats to advise other countries. Each country know what to do.

"If they want our embassy to be in the country, that's up to them because we are the guest to each country. If they want us to stay, we stay, if they say go, we go. It is up to the government," he said.

Al-Yacoubi also claimed that Iraq not only have enough support from Islamic countries but also from non-Islamic nations.

"Actually there are many countries that are supporting Iraq not only from Islamic nations, even among Americans, Australians, Japanese and Germans because people do not like to go to war. So, all people and nations are with us against the war," he said.

Meanwhile, Abdul Hamid expressed sadness over the Iraq war which would not solve problems but instead create lot of hardship to Iraqis.

He said Al-Yacoubi was grateful that he was in a peaceful country like Malaysia and was proud of Malaysians who supported Iraq to the extent that they raise their hands in respect whenever they saw the Iraq flag and Al-Yacoubi's official car.

He also said Al-Yacoubi was proud of Dr Mahathir for his firmness in voicing Malaysia's stand against the Iraq war.

Al-Yacoubi also said Dr Mahathir was an outstanding Islamic leader in this century, he added.

-- BERNAMA

SSA AHH TS