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Syed Hamid-Iraq

IRAQ'S STATUS IN OIC A BIG QUESTION, SAYS SYED HAMID

DOHA (QATAR), Sept 22 (Bernama) -- Iraq's status in the OIC will be an important question that is bound to be raised although it is not officially on the agenda, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said.

"Even though Iraq now has an interim governing council and cabinet, it is still under the control of the occupying forces. Currently, some states see it as 'under transition' and not as an independent country, whereas OIC is composed of independent nation states.

"We are going to look at how not to deprive the Iraqi people of their rightful place, (especially since) the Arab League has taken its own decision (to accept the present US-appointed governing council)," the minister said in an interview here yesterday.

He spoke to Bernama after he had an audience with the outgoing OIC chairman, the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and held talks with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud.

Syed Hamid was on a one-day visit to Doha to personally deliver the invitation letter from Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is hosting the conference from Oct 11-18 at the Putrajaya Conference Centre.

According to Syed Hamid, Iraq has indicated that it is "interested" in attending the OIC summit.

"But not everybody takes the same view about its presence," he said.

Asked if Iraq's current representatives would be turned away if they wanted to take Iraq's seat at the OIC summit, the minister said: "There are certain procedural matters that need to be sorted out, certain technical details that have to be looked at. For example, there's a committee to look at credentials.

"It is not a question of wanting to turn them away. So I don't want to speculate. We will look at it when the time comes," he said.

He also said that Malaysia had invited Russia, the Philippines, South Africa and Sri Lanka to attend the OIC summit as observers.

Syed Hamid came to Doha from Jeddah, where he met with Saudi Arabian Deputy Premier and Chief of the national guard Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, who also confirmed his participation at the OIC conference.

-- BERNAMA

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