

04 MAR 2003

Mahathir-Departure

PRIME MINISTER LEAVES FOR OIC EMERGENCY MEETING IN DOHA

KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left here today for the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) emergency meeting in Doha, Qatar.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, departed from the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang, near here, at 2.30pm.

Present to send them off were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and cabinet ministers including Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob (Information), Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs), Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik (Transport) and Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting (Housing and Local Government).

The two-day OIC emergency meeting starting today was called by the OIC chairman, Qatar, to discuss the threat of war on Iraq and the West Asian crisis, six days after an informal meeting of OIC members in Kuala Lumpur.

The meeting in Kuala Lumpur was called by Malaysia to take advantage of the presence of many OIC leaders at the 13th Non-Aligned Movement summit that ended last Tuesday. It was attended by 51 of the 57 OIC members.

Among others, the Kuala Lumpur meeting agreed to "think about the idea" of using oil, one of the most valued commodities in the world, as a weapon to avert a looming US-led war on Iraq.

The meeting, which received support from Qatar, also called on Iraq to comply with the United Nations Resolution 1441 on disarmament.

After the Doha meeting, Dr Mahathir will be on leave for two months until May 4. Abdullah will be the acting prime minister and acting finance minister during the period.

During his leave, Dr Mahathir will make working visits to Brazil and Jeddah.

-- BERNAMA

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