

23 SEP 2003

OIC-Qatar

QATAR'S EMIR CONFIRMS ATTENDANCE AT PUTRAJAYA OIC SUMMIT

By: Lena Liew

DOHA, Sept 23 (Bernama) -- The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifah al-Thani, has confirmed his attendance at the 10th Session of the Organisation of Islamic Conference Summit in Malaysia next month where he will hand over the chairmanship to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said this in an interview with Bernama after he had an audience with the Sheikh Hamad and held talks with the Qatari Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud, here.

"I am very glad the Emir has confirmed his attendance at the Putrajaya OIC Summit because this is a very important Summit," he said.

Syed Hamid was on a one-day visit to Doha to personally deliver the invitation from Dr Mahathir for the conference to be held from Oct 11 to 18 at the newly inaugurated Putrajaya Conference Centre.

He said as the outgoing chair of the OIC, Sheikh Hamad expressed confidence that Malaysia would do an excellent job chairing the 57-member grouping for the next three years.

"The Emir was very encouraging...he believes that Malaysia will lead the OIC successfully. We will be looking forward to learning from Qatar and sharing our experiences at the upcoming Summit," said Syed Hamid.

The Minister came to Doha from Jeddah, where he met with the 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.

Syed Hamid was accompanied by Malaysia's Under-Secretary for West Asia and North Africa, Datuk Wan Yusuf Embong, and his special officer, Hasnuddin Hamzah.

In attendance were Malaysian Ambassador to Kuwait, Husni Zai Yaacob, who is responsible for Qatar, and First Secretary at the Malaysian Embassy in Kuwait, Zamani Ismail.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia was gearing up for very good attendance at the Summit themed "Knowledge and Morality for the Progress of the Ummah."

The OIC Conference would begin with the Senior Officials' Meeting on Oct 11, followed by the Foreign Minister's Preparatory Meeting from Oct 13 to 14 and the Summit among OIC Heads of State and Governments would commence from Oct 16 to 18.

Syed Hamid confirmed that Bangladesh has offered its candidate - special advisor to the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Salauddin Quader Chowdhury - for the post of OIC Secretary-General.

"So far we are not aware of any other candidate," he said, adding that it was Asia's turn to hold the post.

The post is determined by consensus via consultations among the OIC Foreign Ministers during their two-day meeting ahead of the Summit proper.

Chowdhury is presently touring the Arabian Gulf countries to seek the support of the leaders and Ambassadors of OIC countries.

Last week, Chowdhury told reporters in Doha that Dhaka had been assured last year that it would be the next consensual candidate.

This is Bangladesh's fourth attempt to occupy the coveted position.

On previous occasions, Dhaka withdrew its claim for the sake of unity within the Ummah, said a report this week in Qatar's Gulf Times.

The four-year term of the current OIC Secretary-General, Dr Abdelouahed

Belkeziz, expires next year.

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