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NAM-Qatar

QATAR AGREES TO INFORMAL OIC TALKS IN KL, SAYS SYED HAMID

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- Qatar, the current chair of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), has agreed to Malaysia-initiated informal talks among OIC members on issues affecting the Muslim world to be held on the sidelines of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Kuala Lumpur next week.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Amir of Qatar, Amir Hamad Khalifa Al-Thani, spoke about the matter yesterday.

"Qatar has agreed and they are supportive of the informal discussions," he told reporters after a function at Wisma Putra today.

He said Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaseem Al-Thani telephoned him yesterday to express his country's support for the informal talks with the prospect of the United States-led war against Iraq and the Israeli-Palestine conflict taking centre stage.

Qatar had initially disagreed to Malaysia's plan to call for the informal consultations scheduled for Feb 26, a day after the NAM Summit.

He said Qatar had also sought Malaysia's support on the convening of an Emergency OIC Summit in Doha on a date to be decided later.

He said Malaysia would support the summit.

On the informal talks in Kuala Lumpur, Syed Hamid said it would be chaired by Dr Mahathir.

He said it was held to take advantage of the attendance of many OIC leaders at the NAM Summit. Of the 114 NAM member countries, 50 are OIC nations.

He said the talks would allow exchange of views and opinions towards a better understanding on current issues and addressing pressing matters concerning the Muslim community worldwide.

He said the discussions would be outside the ambit of the OIC Charter and would not be in any position to come up with resolutions.

Syed Hamid said invitation letters had been sent out to OIC countries yesterday and he believed that they would be receptive to the idea of consulting each other in such a forum.

"It will be a pity if the war on Iraq takes place when the OIC has not even articulated its views (on the crisis)," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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