

21 FEB 2003

NAM-Syed Hamid (OIC)

QATAR INVITES DR M TO OIC EMERGENCY MEETING

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Qatar has invited Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to attend the Organisation of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) emergency meeting which is scheduled for March 4 and 5.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said his Qatari counterpart Ahmed Abdullah Al-Mahmoud handed him the invitation letter at their meeting here yesterday.

Syed Hamid said he had informed Dr Mahathir of the matter but could not confirm yet whether the Prime Minister would be attending the meeting in Doha.

"I have already informed the Prime Minister. (However) the Prime Minister will be on leave then. I urged him to attend the meeting because many OIC countries have asked for his presence," he told a news conference after meeting Ecuador's Foreign Minister Nina Pacari Vega on the sidelines of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit here today.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to take two months' leave beginning March.

Syed Hamid said he had assured Ahmed Abdullah that the OIC meeting proposed to be held here on Feb 26 would be an informal one to discuss issues of peace that would have a bearing on OIC member countries.

"We have no problem supporting the emergency meeting (to be held) in Doha after the informal discussion in Kuala Lumpur. We have received a lot of support from OIC countries to hold the informal meeting. Most of them have asked the Prime Minister to attend," he said.

Malaysia viewed the informal meeting as an important occasion for exchanging views and getting input on various issues affecting the world, he said.

Syed Hamid said OIC countries would continue to be marginalised if they remained silent on various issues that have a direct impact on them.

"OIC countries should not feel marginalised, and we should play an appropriate role to give our input for a peaceful approach to resolving whatever conflicts (or) war which will only bring problems," he said.

Syed Hamid said the government had also extended invitations to OIC countries that are not NAM members to attend the informal meeting.

Qatar is the current chairman of the OIC, and 50 of its 57 members are also part of NAM.

"We will not make any statement or communique. It is more of an informal meeting, just to see the stands of member countries. We are merely taking advantage of their attendance at the NAM Summit," he said.

Meanwhile, Syed Hamid said Vega, at their 30-minute talk, expressed Ecuador's desire to get various types of assistance from Malaysia.

Ecuador was keen to learn about Malaysia's oil palm plantation, land development and information and communications technology (ICT) sectors, he said.

Syed Hamid said he told Vega that Latin American countries had to ensure political stability in their region if they wanted to see continued progress.

-- BERNAMA

AZH MFJ YBY