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OIC-Iraq (With Pix)

IRAQI GOVERNING COUNCIL SEEKS RECOGNITION FROM OIC

By Mohd Haikal Isa

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- The new head of Iraq's Provisional Governing Council flew into Malaysia today for the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit with the hope of getting endorsement for the council from member countries.

Iyad Allawi said the council established by the United States occupation force after the ouster of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein expected the Islamic countries to stand firmly behind it "during this difficult period".

"We hope indeed this will happen. We will talk to them to that effect. We really expect them to be with us, to stand firmly with us and support us.

"Iraq is a very important country. It has always been the cornerstone of the Islamic and Arab countries," he told Bernama on arrival at the KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang for the summit.

Allawi said OIC member countries' recognition would be a positive step forward.

"We would like the Islamic countries to assist us to move forward and for Iraq to have democracy and stability," said Allawi who was received by the Council's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari at the airport.

He said the OIC summit in this Malaysian federal administrative capital was an important meeting point to engage the international community and Muslim brothers in a positive way.

On the question of transition of power from the occupying power to the council, he hoped the process would be expedited.

"This is the position of the governing council. In order to achieve this, we need a firm and positive attitude from the international community especially the Islamic countries.

"We are calling for the transfer of sovereignty as soon as possible," he said.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today that foreign occupation of Iraq must be brought to an end as soon as possible as desired by the Iraqi people.

In his opening address at the OIC ministerial preparatory meeting, he said the occupying power must work in earnest on a time table for a democratically elected government to be installed within a reasonable time frame.

The Iraqi issue is expected to dominate talks at this summit apart from the concern over Israel's continued aggression against the Palestinians and its recent aerial attack on neighbouring Syria.

Asked if the other governing council members were satisfied with the US efforts to transfer power to the Iraqis, Allawi said: "Yes, as the process needed to be done in a constructive manner."

Nevertheless, Alawi said it could be done faster.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will chair the summit of the 57-member organisation on Thursday and Friday.

The summit has drawn the largest number of Muslim leaders since the inception of the OIC in 1969.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Russia's President Vladimir Putin, who is keen to get his country become part of the OIC, are among the invited guests.

-- BERNAMA

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