

04/10/2003

Iraq to attend OIC summit as member

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) will take part in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit as a member, not an observer, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

The IGC's participation is also no indicator of Malaysia's or the OIC's support for the United States' interference in the affairs of Iraq, he clarified.

Following the acknowledgement of the IGC by OIC foreign ministers at the United Nations in New York two days ago, Iraq will now attend the summit as a member, Syed Hamid said.

Malaysia had also supported the move to acknowledge the IGC.

The OIC would only acknowledge Iraq's participation as being representative of the Iraqi people, and not the foreign power that was occupying the country.

"Iraq is a member. But this does not mean we acknowledge the US' backing of the interim administration.

"The OIC does not acknowledge the US' role," he said at Menara Datuk Onn after attending a meeting between Timor Leste President Xanana Gusmao and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

On who would lead the Iraqi delegation to the summit, Syed Hamid said the person would be whoever was current chairman of the IGC, which rotates the post among council members.

Ahmad Chalabi, initially thought to be Iraq's representative to the summit, will no longer be attending as he ended his chairmanship of the IGC a few days ago, Syed Hamid said.

Until recently, it looked as if Iraq's seat at the OIC summit would be vacant as the country was considered an occupied land with no proper Government.

However, requests by the Arab League to include Iraq and the recent development by the OIC foreign ministers have turned things in Iraq's favour.

"We are not sidelining Iraq from the OIC because there was no request to do so. So we will accept their representative at the OIC summit," Syed Hamid said.

On Gusmao's call on Abdullah, Syed Hamid said it was part of the Timor Leste president's unofficial visit to Malaysia.

Syed Hamid said the two leaders discussed bilateral co-operation in development and also Asean issues. Timor Leste is not a member of Asean.

Malaysia and Timor Leste were also expected to sign a few agreements when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad visits the country for two days beginning Oct 22.