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Qatar all for OIC talks in KL

QATAR is all for the Malaysia-initiated informal meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference on Feb 26 to discuss the Iraqi crisis after the 13th Non-Aligned Movement Summit ends in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday.

Acting Director of the department of international organisations, conference and treaties in the Qatari Foreign Affairs Ministry Adel Ali Al-Khal said Qatar appreciated Malaysia's effort to host the meeting.

He denied a report attributed to him that Qatar, the OIC chair, felt that Malaysia was not the right place nor Wednesday the right time to host the informal OIC meeting to discuss the Iraqi crisis.

On the contrary, Al-Khal said Qatar was more than happy to attend the meeting.

"It (the report) is not correct ... we are going to attend the meeting and we are very happy to do that," he told the New Straits Times during a break of the NAM ministerial meeting yesterday.

Al-Khal also said that Qatar believed all the OIC member nations attending the NAM Summit would stay on for the informal meeting.

"We believe all of them will attend the informal meeting because the Iraq issue is very serious," he said.

With the United States and its ally, Britain, threatening to attack Iraq at any time, Malaysia suggested to Qatar, as chair of OIC, that OIC hold an informal meeting to discuss the Iraqi crisis.

Al-Khal, who expects the NAM Summit to come up with a strong statement on the Iraqi issue, said Malaysia's move to host the informal meeting was a signal of OIC's concern over the possibility of war against Iraq.

"The informal meeting is very significant. It is a signal to others that the OIC is concerned with what is happening in Iraq," he said, adding that Malaysia has been making the necessary arrangement for the meeting.

Asked if decisions made at the informal meeting would make a difference to the US intention to attack Iraq, Al-Khal said the OIC's voice on the matter would be very clear.

Al-Khal, who headed the Qatari delegation to the NAM senior officials meeting which ended on Friday, said the informal meeting should be seen as a prelude to the OIC emergency summit in Doha on March 4-5 which will discuss, among others, the Iraqi issue.

Qatar expects all OIC Heads of States and Governments to attend the Summit, which will be held three days after the March 1 Arab League Summit, also in Doha.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar had on Friday said that Qatar had sent a letter to his Ministry requesting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's presence at the emergency OIC meeting.