

13/10/2003

OIC foreign ministers arrive to fine-tune resolutions

PUTRAJAYA, Sun. - Foreign ministers from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference arrived today ahead of the ministerial meeting tomorrow to fine-tune the resolutions on a raft of key issues.

Topping the list is a call, sounded by OIC secretary-general Dr Abdelouahed Belkeziz, for a clear Islamic commitment to drive out US-led occupation troops from Iraq and sanctions against Israel.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi, representing president Yasser Arafat, who is trapped in his Ramallah headquarters, landed this morning at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport vowing that the armed resistance against Israel would go ahead as it was the only way to end the occupation.

His stand drew wide sympathy and support from the 57 members of the grouping attending the 10th Summit at the gleaming Putrajaya Convention Centre.

Anger towards Israel, mounting due to its recent attacks on targets in Syria, is also high on the list of resolutions.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Shara, who also arrived today, will likely see overwhelming support in condemning the Jewish State.

Other foreign ministers who touched down at KLIA today were Prince Saud Al Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Yusuf Alawi (Oman) and M. Morshed Khan (Bangladesh).

They were joined by Mustafa Osman Ismail (Sudan), Kassymzhomart (Kazakhstan), Souef Mohamed El Amine (Comoros), Khurshid Ahmed Kasauri (Pakistan), Fathulla Jameel (Maldives).

The first head of State to arrive for the summit on Thursday was Bosnia Herzegovina's Sulejman Tihic.

Lending credence to the summit's theme Knowledge and Morality for the Progress of Ummah will be the participation of three leaders from non-OIC countries - Russian president Vladimir Putin, Philippine president Gloria Arroyo and Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Their participation, which will be one of the highlights of the summit due to ongoing problems with pockets of minority Muslims in each of the three countries, will be boosted by a growing list of OIC leaders who have confirmed their attendance at the summit.

The latest to confirm attendance is Iranian president Mohammad Khatami.

His presence will help the country to rally support from OIC members concerned with growing tensions arising from US allegations that its peaceful nuclear programme was a front for the development of weapons.

Another leader who will be coming to seek assistance from the organisation is Sudanese president Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir.

He will be coming to shore up support for Sudan's reconstruction and peace settlement for the country's southern territory, which has been plagued by civil war.

While politics and the effects of Sept 11 on the ummah will dominate the summit, another key component being keenly followed is the strengthening of economic ties and the development of Islamic banking, which is one of the fastest growing sectors in global finance.

A first of its kind OIC business forum and exposition has attracted participation from major trading nations such as South Korea, China, France and Taiwan.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open the

six-day exposition beginning on Tuesday.