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Mahathir-Iraq

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KEMAMAN, Feb 19<sup>th</sup> (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Iraq's conditional offer to withdraw from Kuwait should be considered first before any decision is taken.

The offer should be given consideration and if there was anything disagreeable in it, it could be raised, the Prime Minister added when asked to comment on the United States's rejection of the offer.

He said: +But, we feel sad because there seems to be a strong desire to destroy Iraq when we, on the other hand, do not agree to its destruction,+ he told reporters during his visit to Perwaja Steel Sdn Bhd here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia only agreed (in the UN Security Council) to getting Iraq out of Kuwait.

Iraq last Friday offered to withdraw from Kuwait on three conditions but this was rejected by the United States and countries of the multi-national forces which have been involved in a month-long military assault on Iraq to get it out of Kuwait.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the US and the allied forces seemed bent on totally destroying Iraq.

He questioned the contrast in reaction of the world and UN to Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and the West Bank of Jordan to that of Iraq over Kuwait. -- more

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Mahathir - Iraq 2 Kemaman

He said: +When Iraq attacked Kuwait, the world and the UN reacted strongly by sending forces but such reaction was absent when Israel invaded southern Lebanon and the West Bank of Jordan.

+Why not defend the existing Arab territory in the West Bank of the Jordan River and in southern Lebanon?+

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also said that the decision by Commonwealth Foreign Ministers last Saturday to continue economic sanctions on South Africa was made by consensus after studying developments in that country.

He said the South African regime must fulfill its promises to end apartheid before the sanctions could be lifted.

He was also asked about PBS President Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan's offer to form a coalition government with Usno in Sabah.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it would be meaningless for PBS to make the offer to Usno as Usno has only a few of its members in the Sabah legislative assembly.

+Furthermore, Usno is part of Barisan Nasional and it will be difficult to create a coalition government with Usno without working with the BN,+ he added. -- Bernama

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