

CNS4854

R GE 22-02 00229 EA572

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Mahathir-Gulf

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SHAH ALAM, Feb 22¹⁹ (Bernama) -- Malaysia today expressed fear that the balance of power in West Asia will no longer exist after the end of the Gulf War when the Islamic countries in the region become weak without the supply of weapons from Western nations or the Soviet Union. (P)

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that in such a situation, Israel would emerge as a major power while the price of oil would be controlled by foreign powers and no longer by members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec).

+We fear there will no longer be a balance of power in West Asia because Iraq will become weak and the other Islamic countries will no longer obtain weapons from the West and the Soviet Union,+ he told a news conference after opening the Canon Opto (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd factory, producer of the Canon camera, here.

He said the countries of West Asia would have to sing to the tune of a superpower which had shown its capability of destroying any country in East Asia which attempted to build itself up militarily.

If this happened, it would be difficult to resolve many cases of injustice at the international level, such as the question of Palestine, he added. -- more

♥22/02/20-42MST

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The prime minister said Malaysia was prepared to strive, to the best of its ability, to revive the situation in West Asia.

On the latest ceasefire proposal of the Soviet Union, he said Malaysia appreciated the intervention and role of the Soviet Union to resolve the crisis at a time when it was faced with domestic problems.

He said the Soviet intervention gave fresh hope to the world, particularly at a time when the United States had developed into such a strong power, unmatched by any other country.

+We fear that there may not be a balance between the East and West in international relations, with one country so strong that it does not heed the views of others,+ he said, adding that this could lead to injustice and exploitation:

On the latest reports that Iraq was prepared to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: +God willing, I hope Iraq will really withdraw from Kuwait as soon as possible so that there will no longer be unnecessary deaths.+ -- more

♥22/02/20-53MST

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Saying that everything now depended on the United States (to accept the peace proposal), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that Malaysia had asked the United States to accept an earlier Iraqi proposal tied to conditions.

+If you are not in agreement with the conditions, you should have negotiations ... but continuing to bomb Iraq with the objective of destroying the country altogether does not show intention to seek peace,+ he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to pursue efforts to resolve the crisis through the United Nations because, according to him, it would not be effective for Malaysia to strive on its own.

On the assurance by the Saudi Arabian government that it would be safe for Muslims to go on pilgrimage this year, the prime minister said the Cabinet would make a decision on the matter early next month.

He said it was necessary for the government to study the security situation in that country before allowing Malaysians to perform the Haj.

Also present at the function were International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib. -- Bernama

♥22/02/21-07MST