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LEAD Mahathir-Gulf '''

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 28, (Bernama) -- Malaysia has appealed to Arab countries to join forces to look after the security of the Middle East following the end of the Gulf war.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in expressing relief over the ceasefire declared in the Gulf earlier today, said: +I certainly hope the vacuum that is left by Iraq shall be made up by the Arab countries coming together, jointly, to look after the security situation in the Middle East+.

He also hoped that Israel would not try to seize the opportunity from the post-war situation as it would create permanent instability in the region.

Speaking at a press conference after the first meeting of the Malaysian Business Council here, he said he was glad that the United States had suspended military action as +this would save a lot of lives+.

He was also glad that Iraqi Presiden Saddam Hussein had finally agreed to comply with all the United Nations resolutions on the Gulf crisis. -- more

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: +Malaysia feels that Presiden Saddam should have done so right from the beginning after it invaded Kuwait.

+We also hope that the destruction is stopped and people learnt their lesson that it is not worthwhile to have territorial ambitions.+

Responding to a question, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was prepared to send assistance +within its means+ to the war-torn if requested by the UN. -- Bernama

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