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Invest in our oil sector, urges Iraq

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IRAQ has invited national oil company Petronas to participate in its oil development programme in anticipation of sanctions against it being lifted.

"We are ready to cooperate with Malaysia in the oil industry and is ready to produce 3 million barrels per day (bpd) after the sanctions are lifted," its National Assembly Speaker Dr Sadoon Hamadi said yesterday.

Iraq produced 3.3 million bpd before the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. On a humanitarian deal with the United Nations, Iraq resumed limited oil exports last December 11 which allows Baghdad to export crude oil worth US\$2 billion (US\$1 = RM2.45) every six months.

The money is used to import much-needed food and medicine. At current prices, the amount will be between 500,000 and 600,000 bpd.

"Malaysia is fast developing and sooner or later will need a secure supply of source of crude oil. Therefore, Malaysia is invited to participate in the oil industry through the export of know-how, machinery and capital," Dr Sadoon told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"We have met Malaysian Government officials and we have explained to them that Iraq is ready to expand its economic relations with Malaysia," he said.

He reassured Malaysia that Iraq is a safe place to invest in. "There is nothing to worry about. There is only an official embargo but internally, the Government is stable and the regime is strong."

Dr Sadoon also invited Malaysian investors to participate in fields such as electronics and telecommunications.

He said Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had told him that Malaysia has reiterated its opposition to the continued UN-imposed economic sanctions on Iraq.

"Malaysia also opposed the unilateral imposition of the 'no-fly zone' by the US and Britain to bar the flights of Iraqi warplanes in certain parts of Iraq," said Dr Sadoon.

Dr Sadoon added that there is no justification for the UN to continue the embargo as Iraq had adhered to all the world body's conditions, including international inspection of Iraqi armaments.

"It is time for the US and the UN to lift the embargo as there is no excuse left. It is just a matter of time before the US will find themselves in a difficult situation," he added.

Sadoon believes that every state, including small nations, could help influence the superpowers to remove the sanctions by taking up the issue and applying pressure at various international fora.

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