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Malaysian stand on Iraq clear

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malaysia has reiterated its opposition to the continued United Nations-imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, Iraqi National Assembly Speaker Dr Sadoon Hamadi said today.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told him of the Malaysian stand during their meeting at the Prime Minister's office today.

The sanctions were imposed in 1990 after Iraq invaded Kuwait.

In an interview with Bernama at his hotel, Sadoon said Dr Mahathir told him that Malaysia also opposed the unilateral imposition of the "no-fly zone" by the United States and Britain to bar the flights of Iraqi warplanes in certain parts of Iraq.

Sadoon, who arrived yesterday for a six-day visit, said he had a 30-minute discussion with the Prime Minister.

"Dr Mahathir also gave the assurance that Malaysia would do her best to participate in Iraq's oil development programme," he said.

Sadoon said he briefed Dr Mahathir on the current situation in Iraq, the effects of the sanctions on the Iraqi people and economy as well as efforts towards lifting the ban.

He said there was 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 high time for the US and the UN to lift the embargo as there is no excuse left."

He said world public opinion agreed that it was now the obligation of the UN to lift the sanctions after Iraq had fulfilled the conditions.

Sadoon said the "oil for food" programme, following partial relaxation of the sanctions, had not fully materialised yet as Iraq needed some time to receive revenue from the sale of the oil to buy food.

Iraq resumed limited oil exports on Dec 11 under the humanitarian deal with the UN which allows Baghdad to export crude oil worth US\$2 billion (RM5 billion) every six months to raise funds to import much needed food and medicine as well as towards defraying UN costs in Iraq.

At current prices, the amount will be between 500,000 and 600,000 barrels per day (bpd).

Iraq produced 3.3 million bpd of oil before the invasion.

The present health and food conditions in Iraq have been described as catastrophic because of the embargo which has caused a severe shortage of food and medicine.

More than 770,000 Iraqis have died up to November last year due to the sanctions.

Sadoon said there was no reported case of cholera in 1989 but 1,216 cases were recorded in 1995 while cases of typhoid rose from 1,812 in 1989 to 26,634 in 1995.

Asked how Iraq survived the six years of ordeal, he said: "Physical power cannot crush the will and determination of the Iraqi people."

He said the people's high spirits, determination and unity behind their leader and a well-organised Government food rationing programme had enabled them to prevail.

Sadoon believed every State, including small nations, could help influence the superpowers on removing the sanctions by taking up the issue and applying pressure at various international fora.

Sadoon also called on Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Mohamed Zahir Ismail.

(END)