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Avoid military action in US-Iraq row, calls Dr M

MALAYSIA has called for diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute between the US and Iraq over the issue of arms inspection in the latter by UN officials.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia's stand is for the issue to be resolved through negotiations and not military action.

"We are opposed to the use of force to coerce any country to submission," he said when asked to comment on the US threat to use military force against Iraq if diplomatic efforts fail to convince Baghdad to provide UN arms inspectors with unrestricted access to all its suspected weapons sites.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is against all weapons of mass destruction.

"Other countries, not only Iraq, have these weapons too. Those should also be destroyed," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that Malaysia wants to see even the conventional weapons destroyed.

Apart from the obvious security threat posed by these so-called conventional weapons, they are also a massive "waste of money" which could otherwise be used to help the poor, he said.

"They are building sophisticated missiles, sophisticated aircraft.

"Rather than putting the money to better use, they are continuing to upgrade the weapons and "make the poor people poorer".

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