

24 FEB 1998

Mahathir-Iraq

MALAYSIA RELIEVED OVER UN-IRAQ DEAL

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysia today lauded the accord clinched between the United Nations and Iraq pertaining to the dispute over weapons inspections in Iraq.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he hoped that the agreement concluded between UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz yesterday would be acceptable to the various parties.

"We are relieved that an agreement has been concluded," he said after visiting Technology Park Malaysia here.

The agreement is to remove a major obstacle to the full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

The deal could head off US-led military strikes against Iraq in the long-running standoff over access for UN arms inspectors to sites suspected of holding chemical or biological weapons.

Asked whether the US and Britain, Washington's closest ally in the crisis, should refrain from using the military force being marshalled in the Gulf region, Dr Mahathir said he felt that they should not threaten to attack Iraq.

"But I feel the threats will continue. It's my opinion...I may be wrong," he said.

On whether UN economic sanctions against Iraq should be withdrawn following the latest development, the prime minister said he hoped the sanctions could be lifted.

"But I feel there will be other excuses for not lifting the economic sanctions," he said. -- BERNAMA

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