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PM urges peaceful solution to crisis over Iraq

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for a peaceful solution to the crisis over Iraq's refusal to grant unhindered United Nations arms inspections in that country. He said it was Malaysia's stand that the problem be resolved through negotiations and diplomatic channels.

"We are opposed to the use of arms in order to coerce any country to submit," he said when asked to comment on the latest US-Iraq crisis at a Press conference after launching the Pelaburan Ehsan Wanita at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir said nobody should have weapons of mass destruction - not Iraq nor other countries.

"We are against it. They (weapons of mass destruction) should also be destroyed."

The Prime Minister said even the conventional weapons were getting costlier and were being improved all the time.

He said all these weapons were a waste of money which could be better spent on helping the poor.

"Instead, they are making the poor people poorer," he added.

Meanwhile Reuters reports that Saudi Arabia has declared its opposition to a military strike against Iraq, setting US Defence Secretary William Cohen a diplomatic challenge when he meets King Fahd today.

The king's brother, Defence Minister Prince Sultan, said his country did not approve of an attack on Iraq, Saudi newspapers reported today.

"We'll not agree and we are against striking Iraq as a people and as a nation," the English-language daily Arab News today quoted the prince as saying.

"At the same time, we say to Saddam Hussein to abide by the UN resolutions in order to protect his people and put an end to their sufferings."

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