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Mahathir-Iraq

UN SHOULD ASK IRAQ TO ALLOW WEAPONS INSPECTORS AND LIFT SANCTIONS, SAYS  
PM

PUTRAJAYA, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- The United Nations should ask Iraq to allow weapons inspectors into the country and then reduce the sanctions imposed on the impoverished nation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"(Imposing) sanctions is not hurting (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein, it is not going to make him die. It hurts the poor people of Iraq, including those who are sick, those who are old, babies.... these are the people who are paying the price for sanctions.

"The people are not responsible for whatever was done by the Iraqi government," he told reporters after opening the new Treasury building, here.

"The United States, with its wish to bomb Iraq, is practising double standards where, on one hand, it tells the nations of the world to follow international rules but on the other hand, if the rule is not beneficial to the US, they ignore it," he said.

Dr Mahathir warned that the impending US attack on Iraq would only prolong the war against terrorism.

"I think so, it will lengthen the period of anti-terrorist fighting," he said.

He said Malaysia knew this because the country had experience in fighting terrorists, which took some 42 years.

"It took us 42 years to defeat the terrorists. It is not easy. In the daytime they may be selling 'sayur' (vegetables) to you and in the night they may become terrorists. They may be your neighbour today, the next day they may blow themselves up from an aeroplane," he added.

He said the United States should consider the support of the other countries before adopting the drastic measure to attack Iraq.

"We want to avoid arousing the anger and hatred of the Muslims. If it (US) attacks Iraq, even Iraq's enemies, including Saudi Arabia, will not agree.

"If it insists on attacking, surely the Muslims will feel discriminated against and the Islamic governments' hatred (will increase)." he said.

Asked whether the integrity of the UN was being challenged by the pressure from the US, he said the UN was crafted by the big powers for their own interests.

"At that time, the number of countries was limited so they felt that if there was a UN they could use it to sanctify their actions. However, when the UN became strong and many countries joined it, the big powers found that they could no longer manipulate it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that these countries would try to manipulate the UN for their own ends and when it could not be manipulated, it would be forgotten.

On another note, the prime minister said that terrorists could be anywhere in world as it was very difficult to identify them.

"It does not mean when they come to the country, we are giving them sanctuary or support. We do not know who they are... we are not aware. If you tell us in the very beginning, it's alright, we can take action, but when we take action before, under our Internal Security Act (ISA), they (Western nations) say it's against the principles of human rights and that we should not take action before a crime is committed.

"So, unfortunately, when a crime is committed, somebody pays a high

price, then only you take action," he added.

He said this when asked to comment on a foreign wire report yesterday that the top Al-Qaeda suspect arrested in Pakistan last week visited Kuala Lumpur two years ago.

Asked about the Western media, which seemed to be encouraging the US to bomb Iraq, he said the media were stoking the fires of war.

"Then there would be lots of news, you can watch on BBC, CNN daily reports in real time about the fighting and then of course they (journalists) will become heroes (when) a journalist is killed. They go there, they get killed of course... they are not heroes," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SR AZH JK