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Mahathir-Iraq

M'SIA WELCOMES IRAQ'S ACCEPTANCE OF UN WEAPONS INSPECTION

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has welcomed Iraq's decision to accept a new United Nations Security Council resolution calling on Baghdad to disarm but is sceptical that the threat of war against Iraq is over.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that there would be other accusations against Iraq that would justify military action.

"For the time being, there will be a respite, until the US feels it (Iraq) is no longer a threat," he said during a dialogue with 31 members of the Japan National Press Club here today.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia opposes any military action against Iraq as it would anger more Muslims.

"Because any act will simply anger more Muslims and there'll be more recruited for the terrorist groups, that is why we oppose military action," he said.

Iraq yesterday accepted the new UN Security Council resolution demanding Baghdad to allow UN arms experts unhindered access to any site suspected of producing chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, or face the consequences.

The prime minister said that previous weapons inspectors complained that they were unable to carry out their work because they were pressured to provide information that was not relevant to their tasks.

He hoped that this time around, the inspectors would submit a good report to avoid any possible war.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia does not propose to take a high profile role over the Iraq issue.

He said that he had written letters to superpower leaders including US President George W. Bush, French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder.

"What we have been doing is to try to explain to the big powers the danger of military action in Iraq," he said.

However, he said, the efforts were all the country could do as Malaysia does not have any clout.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia had communicated with Muslim countries to explain the need for them to focus on their internal problems and develop their countries.

He however regretted that not much had been done.

-- BERNAMA

ANA LES AHH RM