

11 MAR 2003

Parliament-Iraq

M'SIA FIRM IN MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATION PROCESS TO RESOLVE IRAQ CRISIS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has been firm in its stand to use the multilateral negotiation process to settle the Iraq conflict and not war which will only worsen the situation, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar told the Dewan Rakyat today.

He said the Malaysian government had always held to principles based on international law and universal justice.

"We disagree to sanctions imposed on Iraq which lead to sufferings of the innocent people. Similarly, the no-fly zone restrictions in the north and south provinces of Iraq and the bombings carried out for more than 10 years by the British and America," he said when replying to Datuk Kamarudin Jaafar during question time.

Kamarudin wanted to know the form of assistance Malaysia would provide to Iraq if it was attacked by the United States even without the go-ahead from the United Nations.

Syed Hamid said a time frame must be given to enable UN Resolution 1441 was fully implemented. The resolution calls for Iraq to disarm.

"We (Malaysia) have played an active role in the UN and the Security Council to lift the sanctions on Iraq and stop the bombings and to respect the integrity and sovereignty of the Iraqi provinces," he said.

Syed Hamid said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had always called for the lifting of sanctions as it caused problems to innocent people.

He said the war on Iraq being planned by the US and its allies would cause instability in West Asia and at international arena.

"It will also jeopardise the world economy. The views of the international community cannot be ignored by the US, Britain and Spain.

"We want a balanced and not unilateral action to achieve global peace," he said.

Replying to a supplementary question from Kamarudin on whether the government would change its policy on the US, Syed Hamid said Malaysia's stand was non-political but on humanitarian and justice grounds.

"The Malaysian government is the only government of a small country that has played a very significant, brave and consistent role.

"During the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit, although there were moves to derail our efforts, we passed resolutions on Iraq and condemned all unilateral actions and wanted due respect to be given to the UN," he said.

Replying to Datuk Mohd Ali Hassan (BN-Tebrau) who wanted Malaysia to boycott US-made goods, Syed Hamid said: "I cannot answer on what we should do because the move will cause problems to our next course of action."

He said America would be punished by the international community and by fellow Americans and this would be the best approach to teach a lesson to the superpower nation.

Speaking to reporters later at Parliament lobby, Syed Hamid said Malaysia wanted permanent members of the Security Council like France, Russia and China to stop the US from dragging the UN to declare war on Iraq.

"We really hope that the permanent members will play a role to stop the US from denying the credibility of the world body for their intention to attack Iraq," he said.

He said there were signs that China, France and Russia would use their

veto power to block the tabling of a second UN resolution by the US and Britain giving permission to attack Iraq.

He, however, said US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair would go ahead to attack Iraq even without the mandate of the UN Security Council.

The US and Britain are also permanent members of the Security Council.

Syed Hamid said based on the statements by the UN Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix and Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency in their reports on the Iraq disarmament, it had been proven that Baghdad had provided full cooperation to disarm as required by the world body under Resolution 1441.

"As a result of the disarmament, the government of President Saddam Hussein will not pose a threat to America or any country in the Gulf region," he added.

-- BERNAMA

FA MHI HS TS