

04 OCT 2003

Mahathir-Iraq

DR MAHATHIR SKEPTICAL US DID NOT KNOW IRAQ HAD NO WEAPONS

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 4 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is skeptical that the Bush administration did not know that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction.

"I don't believe that they didn't know, If they suspected that there were, they should have given Dr Hans Blix (United Nations chief weapons inspector) a chance to carry out a full investigation," the prime minister said.

He said US President George W. Bush's decision to attack Iraq was hasty and made without sufficient proof and now no weapons of mass destruction were found in that country.

It was sad that the Bush administration, which was responsible for world peace, was prepared to make the drastic decision to attack Iraq, killing so many people in the process, based merely on grounds that were not fully proven, he said during a visit to the Putrajaya Convention Centre, here.

He was asked to comment on reports that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had reported that it had not found any signs of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq although there was ample proof to show that Saddam Hussein intended to make chemical and biological weapons.

He said that in the absence of strong proof, it was a big lie for the US to attack Iraq.

Asked whether any legal action could be taken against the US through the UN or other world bodies for attacking Iraq, he said: "I think we can't do that but what can be done is that their own people must realise this and use it when considering the leaders that they want to choose."

He also said that the conflict over the US attack on Iraq, including the CIA report, could be discussed further at the OIC summit if the leaders were agreeable.

However, he added: "I'm not interested in blaming others. What I'm interested in is what we can do (to improve ourselves in the OIC). I don't think blaming others can get us anywhere,"

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman, spent nearly three hours at the convention centre witnessing the rehearsal for the opening of the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit which will be held from Oct 11 to 18.

He was generally satisfied with the preparations but said minor changes were needed.

He said another rehearsal was needed for the liaison and protocol officers who would be receiving and escorting the heads of state.

-- BERNAMA

RIZ PR JK