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OIC-Mahathir (Iraq)

IRAQIS, NOT US, DETERMINE LEADERSHIP, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today only the people of Iraq and neither the United States nor any other power can determine the country's leadership.

The Prime Minister said if the change in the ruling regime was something that could be accepted by the people of Iraq, then nobody could deny their rights.

"I don't think we have the right to deny Iraqis' rights, not even the Iraqi government, but the people," he told a media conference after chairing the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) informal meeting, here.

He said it was a well-known fact that the US would like to see the ruling regime led by President Saddam Hussein changed, irrespective of war or not.

Since the start of the Iraqi conflict, the US had made it clear that it wanted Saddam's government toppled by a new regime.

To a question on the United Nations' demand for Iraq to destroy its al-Samoud missiles, Dr Mahathir said the country must adhere to the instruction.

"It's up to Iraq whether they want to comply or not. Our view is that anything that UN asked Iraq to do, then Iraq has to do," he said.

Iraq now faces a test of whether they will comply with the demand by the UN weapons inspectors to destroy by Saturday its al-Samoud missiles which were said to violate the range limit set by the UN.

-- BERNAMA

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