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MALAYSIANS IN IRAQ WILL BE EVACUATED IF WAR IS IMMINENT, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 26 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will pull back its staff and evacuate its citizens in Iraq and the neighbouring countries if war against Iraq is imminent, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We have to think of our needs. If the war is imminent we have to pull back our staff and some of the students there," the prime minister said when asked to comment on Washington's alert to its expatriates around the world to be ready for emergency evacuations, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, including war.

Dr Mahathir said this at a media conference at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base in Subang, near here, upon his return from his visits to Lebanon, Egypt and Davos, Switzerland, where he attended the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Asked on the advice to Malaysians if war on Iraq was inevitable, he said the impact would be minimal.

"But of course if we (Malaysians) are near Iraq we should be extra careful," he said.

The US State Department had on Friday sent cables to all its diplomatic missions abroad instructing them to alert Americans in their jurisdictions to be ready to move quickly amid increasing signs that military action in Iraq may be looming.

Officials said the advice covered eventualities other than war, including terrorism, natural disasters and personal emergencies, but did not rule out a link between the cables and the situation in Iraq.

-- BERNAMA

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