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Mahathir-Iraq

OIL REAL REASON FOR US PLANS TO ATTACK IRAQ, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reiterated today that the real motive of the United States' plans to attack Iraq was to gain control of the oil resources of the West Asian nation.

The Prime Minister said the US dared to attack Iraq because it knew that it would be the innocent Iraqi people and Iraqi soldiers who would be killed and not Americans or US troops because the superpower had sophisticated weapons.

He said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein did not inflict violence against Americans but Washington was adamant to invade Iraq even after the Gulf War had ended more than 10 years ago.

America's aim was to acquire Iraq's oil wealth, he said.

"This is why we feel that the US plans to attack Iraq are for other reasons -- to take control of Iraq's oil found in abundance," he said when speaking at a peace and anti-war gathering organised by the People's Alliance for Peace Malaysia (Peace Malaysia) at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base car park in Subang.

Dr Mahathir spoke at the gathering upon his return after a week-long visit to Lebanon, Egypt and Davos, Switzerland where he attended the World Economic Forum.

With an estimated oil reserves of 112 billion barrels, Iraq is said to have the second largest oil deposits in the world after Saudi Arabia.

Dr Mahathir said whatever is the report of the UN arms inspectors on weapons of mass destruction allegedly possessed by Iraq, it would be meaningless if America's aim was to attack Iraq, ignoring the inspectors' reports and protests from the world.

"...If their intention is to attack, whatever reports are of no use. Hence, it is clear that this is a unilateral decision," said Dr Mahathir, referring to America's plans to strike Iraq being opposed by almost the whole world except for one or two countries like Australia and Britain.

He said America wants to go to war because its way of fighting the war would ensure no casualties among Americans but would result in the death of innocent Iraqi people and Iraqi soldiers.

"The weapons to be used will be fired by remote control from hundreds of thousands of miles away, reportedly with accuracy and precision.

"But actually they are not accurate. Many of the casualties will be the ordinary people who are not involved in the war. This is our fear," he said.

Dr Mahathir said war was not the way to settle any dispute or problem.

He said peaceful negotiation was the best way.

"If angry with Saddam Hussein, go and negotiate with him, don't kill innocent Iraqis," he said.

In congratulating Peace Malaysia for its peace initiatives, Dr Mahathir said although in Malaysia, the people had different views on certain issues, they were resolved peacefully.

"That's our way in Malaysia...settlement reached through negotiations while war is cruel. War does not bring any good to anyone. Eventually, all will end up losers," he said, drawing reference to the civil war in Lebanon.

The war, which went on for nearly 16 years, ended in 1991, resulting in the death of thousands of Lebanese and loss of properties. Lebanon is currently undergoing reconstruction.

Dr Mahathir said the gathering, attended by about 2,000 people from political parties, youth movements, non-governmental organisations and students, would prove to the world that Malaysians were peace-loving and concerned over the fate of war victims.

"I hope this effort will be continued until the world realises that war is not the way to settle disputes among certain countries," he said.

Earlier, in his speech, Umno Youth secretary Zulkifli Alwi described Dr Mahathir as the hero of world peace for his contributions and views on world peace.

He said Dr Mahathir was brave in voicing Malaysia's stand on various issues such as on war and violence which were also supported by other countries in the world.

"His struggles are an inspiration to us to launch the peace and anti-war campaign," he said.

Zulkifli said a mammoth gathering would be held on Feb 23 at the Merdeka Square where a memorandum bearing one million signatures would be handed to Dr Mahathir to show Malaysians' concern for world peace.

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