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NAM-Iraq

IRAQ WARNS NAM DELEGATES ABOUT POSSIBLE US PRESSURE

By: R.Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 5 (Bernama) -- Iraq, a founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), has cautioned NAM members that the United States may pressure them to safeguard its global interests.

Iraq's Ambassador to Malaysia Kais Al-Yacoubi said the US as the sole superpower would want to exert this pressure on NAM members so that it could dominate the world.

He hoped NAM members in line with their aspirations to live peacefully and to be independent in decision-making would not give in to such pressure.

"The noble principles of NAM itself are against the aims of the US to dominate the world as the sole superpower."

"I am expecting that there will be very big pressure exerted on this summit in an attempt to make it a failure," he said in an interview with Bernama.

According to him the United States was interested in seeing NAM and other countries being split and not working as a team.

Iraq is now locked in a confrontation with the US over alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. The US has said that it would attack Iraq to disarm the country with or without the approval of the United Nations (UN).

Countries across the world including many NAM members have voiced their strong opposition against any unilateral action by the US saying that the Iraq issue should be resolved peacefully within the UN framework.

Kais expressed his hope and belief that the 13th KL NAM Summit here this month under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would be able to overcome this pressure as well as any attempt to weaken it.

"I have full confidence in the wise leadership of Prime Minister Mahathir and his government. They will carry out this summit effectively and successfully. Our hopes are big that this summit can achieve success in line with the noble principles of the NAM movement," he said.

Kais said that the 114-member movement had never been against any country but had always striven to ensure a peaceful world with respect for each other.

"This movement is not against anyone and its principles and aims are noble, but is against control and domination and this will entail enemies and not because NAM provokes others," he said.

Kais said NAM was much more important now and needed to be more active as the "challenges are big and decisive."

The KL NAM Summit is from Feb 20 to 25 at the Putra World Trade Centre. NAM's origin can be traced back to the Bandung Conference in 1955 which brought together 29 Asian and African leaders. The movement held its first summit in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in September 1961.

Kais said that at the KL summit, Iraq would raise "basic issues as well current issues" such as the the UN sanctions on his country, the US' threat to wage war and the Palestinian issue.

"We are sure other countries will also be keen to help and support the Iraqi people in confronting these unjust sanctions," he said.

"And believe me, most members of NAM will join Iraq and support efforts to find a peaceful solution to this threat against Iraq, within the framework of the UN...far away from any pressure. The provocation and US

threats to invade Iraq should be discussed within the movement," he said.

Kais said about 1.5 million Iraqis had died as a direct result of the sanctions imposed some 13 years ago by the UN Security Council.

"They prevented and stopped all shipments, even pencils for students claiming that these can be used in weapons of destruction. They even stopped sending vaccines for cattle and other animals because they say the vaccines can be used in biological weapons. A very concerted plan indeed to prevent the Iraqi people from living like people in other countries. The impact of the sanctions is getting worse by the day," he said.

Kais said the Iraqi people appreciated Malaysia's support for the lifting of the sanctions as well as the ongoing Aman Malaysia' one million signature campaign against the war.

"Under the wise and firm leadership of Dr Mahathir, we are sure he will lead this movement towards achieving better results despite big challenges in this current situation. We are very keen to give our utmost support to the success of this NAM meeting", added Kais.

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