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NAM troika leaders will not visit Iraq

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Non-Aligned Movement's troika leaders will not go to Iraq as they are not the officials competent to assess whether or not the country is clear of weapons of mass destruction, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister and NAM chairman said the movement was not the party that had to be convinced.

"There are other people who want to be convinced that there are no weapons of mass destruction (in Iraq)."

At a late-night Press conference here, Dr Mahathir said: "I'm quite sure that even if we say that we find nothing in Iraq, nobody is going to take us seriously.

"It is the (UN weapons) inspectors who do that kind of thing. So we will not be making a visit to Iraq."

He was asked whether the NAM troika would accept Iraq Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadhan's invitation to visit Baghdad to inspect and certify that the country is clear of all weapons of mass destruction.

The troika comprises the past, present and future NAM chairs.

Taha had invited the troika leaders to visit Iraq when he addressed the plenary session earlier in the day.