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PM informs UN of NAM's stand

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has written to all 15 United Nations Security Council members on the Non-Aligned Movement's stand against the impending war on Iraq.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Dr Mahathir, as NAM chairman for the next three years, sent the letters immediately after the NAM summit on Feb 26.

Asked if NAM was expecting any response, Syed Hamid, who is secretary-general of the NAM for the next three years, said: "I don't think it works that way. Whether there is response or not, we have done our part to convey NAM's decision on Iraq."

The UN Security Council members are the United States, Britain, Spain, Bulgaria, Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico, Pakistan, China, France, Russia, Germany and Syria.

Asked about UN weapons inspectors' latest report on Iraq, Syed Hamid said Malaysia always believed that inspectors appointed by the UN should be relied upon.

"Questioning the UN means its respect and dignity has been challenged. For the sake of world peace and stability there is stronger reason for the UN weapon inspectors to be given more time.

"In fact, all reports have shown they have not found anything that can be considered a threat. The reason (for war) given by the US keeps changing... first it is for a regime change, then it is terrorism and later for the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction."

Syed Hamid was speaking after the Ninth Meeting of the Joint Commission between Malaysia and Thailand here today.

"We have to hope for a miracle in the name of humanity. The implication of a war is far-reaching. We have to pray that there would be no war."

Asked what could be done if US went ahead to wage war on Iraq, he said the US was a major power but if it ignored the UN and multilateral process, it would set a dangerous precedent.

"I hope big powers will begin to listen to international consensus, which will provide room for better leadership."

He said smaller nations should speak out.

"It is better than being condemned for not doing anything. Voicing our stand against war does not mean we are against the US or Britain. Even their own people are against war," he added.

Syed Hamid said while Malaysia was a small country, it hoped that major powers such as Russia, France, China and Germany would be able to influence the US.