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'Accusations against Syria an attempt to divert attention from Iraq'

Ahmad Fuad Yahya

ACCUSATIONS that Syria possesses chemical and biological weapons and had supplied such weapons and modern equipment to Saddam Hussein are aimed at

diverting world opinion from the US-led invasion of Iraq.

Syrian Ambassador to Jordan, Abdul Fattah Ammourah, said the accusations

by the Americans were also aimed at distracting world attention from Israel, a country which possesses nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

"They want to cover their failure and cover the aftermath of the war," he said in an interview with the Joint Media Team Malaysia at the Syrian embassy here yesterday.

"I would say that maybe they succeeded. They have made us busy (countering the accusations) that we are not talking about the number of civilians who have fallen (in Iraq), we are not talking about the destruction, we are not talking about the instability and insecurity."

Abdul Fattah said Syria gave no importance to such accusations because it knows the motive behind them.

"We know that Syria plays a very important and crucial role (in the region), has its way, has its position, has its multi-economic, multi-political systems.

"We are also not worried because we have international legitimacy."

The accusations, he said, has diverted world attention from the foreign occupation of a country. The accusers do not want the world to criticise their actions.

"In the same way nobody is talking about the victims in Palestine and nobody is criticising the Israeli forces and their action against the Palestinian people."

The Americans, he said, want to divert world attention from the victims in Iraq and Palestine.

The Americans also accuse certain section of the mass media of being biased and attack them for reporting incidents which they were not happy with.

The ambassador said the accusers were also taking control of oil in Iraq.

"We saw what happened in Iraq ...the looting and all but not the situation at the oil fields."

Abdul Fattah said the Americans have taken control of the oil fields.

The ambassador said the Americans want democracy in Iraq but they should

remember that it should not be imposed by force.

"Democracy is the rule of the people by the people.

But there is no democracy under occupation."

Abdul Fattah appreciated Malaysia's stand that there should have been a

peaceful solution in Iraq instead of war.

The stand, he said, was positively expressed and made known clearly.
"This was very much appreciated and welcomed not only by Arab countries, but also other Islamic countries and others.

"The world will remember this position."

Abdul Fattah said efforts must be made to preserve the right of the people of Iraq to rule themselves.

The people of Iraq, he said, should also have peace, stability and security.

Abdul Fattah said the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was now in safe hands .

(Malaysia had earlier in the year taken over the chairmanship of NAM from South Africa).

He believes that the position Malaysia has taken so far, particularly its stand on Iraq, outlines the important role that will be played by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"It will be effective," said Abdul Fattah.

The Ambassador said NAM has played a very important role in the fight against colonialism and neo-colonialism.

He said the role of NAM is important now that the Americans have declared their "if you are not with us, then you are against us" stand.

"It is our duty to co-operate and stay united.

"We must give the UN and all regional organisations a more effective role to play," he said. - JMTM