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Iraq Security Vital for Whole Region: Iran FM

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BAGHDAD (AFP) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki on a visit to Baghdad on Saturday said keeping violence under control in Iraq was vital to protecting the security of the entire region.

Mottaki arrived to offer his condolences on the death of Shiite politician Abdel Aziz Al-Hakim and spoke about recent truck bombings in the capital, which killed 95 people, during a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

"Having the security and stability in Iraq or losing it will have a direct effect on all neighbouring countries," said Mottaki.

Maliki in turn insisted that security challenges would not disrupt the country's progress.

"The horrible crimes that took place on bloody Wednesday will not reduce our will to fight the Baathist alliance, which is planning to take the country back to square one and an era of tyranny," said the Iraqi premier.

The twin truck bombings at the ministries of finance and foreign affairs on August 19 also wounded about 600 people.

Iraq has blamed the attacks on Baath party members loyal to the ousted regime of Saddam Hussein and said that the finance ministry bombing was orchestrated by Baathists being harboured in neighbouring Syria.

Speaking earlier, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told AFP that Mottaki came to Baghdad to present his condolences for the deaths of Hakim and those who perished in the recent attacks.

Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, the country's largest Shiite party, died in hospital in Iran on Wednesday, after a 28-month battle against lung cancer.

His body returned to Iraq on Friday and he is due to be buried in the holy Shiite shrine city of Najaf later Saturday.

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