

US must do more, Mahathir tells Bush

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KULIM, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told US president George Bush that Malaysia had done enough to help the Vietnamese refugees since 1975.

But it was now time for the US to show greater sincerity and urgency to remove the remaining 20,000 refugees from Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said this in reply to a letter from President Bush a few months ago.

Mr Bush had written to Dr Mahathir asking Malaysia to continue giving temporary shelter to new arrivals from Vietnam.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had done enough to help the fleeing Vietnamese.

Since the fall of South Vietnam 15 years ago, Malaysia had given shelter to 250,000 Vietnamese refugees.

He was replying to a question at a Press conference at the Sekolah Menengah Labu Besar, about 20km from here.

He said although Malay-

sia had to cope with some 700,000 immigrants and refugees from Indonesia and the Philippines, it had never asked for US assistance.

"Malaysia is a small country with 17 million people whereas the US is a big country with 270 million people. It would not make much difference if the US were to receive all the Vietnamese refugees," Dr Mahathir said.

After all, this was a problem created by the Americans, he said.

He said when America turned away illegal Mexicans who tried to cross the Rio Grande and pushed away the Haitians, nobody complained. "Why condemn us for doing less?" Dr Mahathir asked.

Commenting on a call by a US congressman to link Malaysia's GSP privileges to its acceptance of Vietnamese refugees, the Prime Minister said it was an attempt at intimidation.

It was unacceptable, said Dr Mahathir.