

PM: DON'T TAKE SIDES

2 - FEB 1991

By Wong Chun Wai

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged Malaysians, particularly Muslims, not to take sides in the Gulf war.

"Muslims should not back only one group in a conflict between Muslims. It is not for us to determine who is right or wrong in this conflict," said the Prime Minister.

Commenting on the move by PAS to send volunteers to Baghdad, Dr Mahathir said: "If they are willing to go because they believe that by taking sides they can re-

solve the problem, then that is their belief."

Dr Mahathir said the Gulf war should not be regarded as a holy war between Muslims and the United States.

He said he could not see how the war could be accepted as *jihād* (holy crusade) when the crisis erupted as a result of one Islamic country invading another.

"If we embark on a *jihād* in this matter, it will only cause more Muslims to die," he told newsmen after opening the \$8 million bird park in Taman Tasik Perdana here today.

On the stand taken by certain groups and political parties which

claimed that the Gulf crisis was a "holy war," he said Malaysia's stand was that it should not support any side in the war.

PAS president Haji Fadzil Noor had sent a letter to Dr Mahathir criticising Malaysia's support of the UN Security Council Resolution 681 which allowed the use of force to bring about the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the conflict was between Iraq and Kuwait and that the dispute should be resolved through peaceful negotiations.

"By going to war, Muslims have become victims because outsiders, who were absent from the area

previously, have now entered the area as a result of the invasion of Kuwait," he added.

He said the Government was not bowing to any pressure in its call to the Security Council to review the implementation of the resolution which called for the liberation of Kuwait.

He said the resolution did not allow the virtual destruction of Iraq. "That is our stand and when we put our vote for the resolution, it was with that condition."

Dr Mahathir said any conflict should be resolved through negotiations and not by going to war.

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Malaysia to help the war victims

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Last week, Foreign Minister Datuk Abu Hassan Omar urged the UN Security Council to meet immediately to review the implementation of the resolution which was against the use of excessive and indiscriminate force in finding a solution to the Gulf crisis.

He had said that the

resolution was actually anti-aggression and a review of the action taken by the allied forces in Iraq must be carried out immediately.

Dr Mahathir said other countries should take a similar stand in calling for a stop to the destruction of Iraq while efforts were made to get Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to negotiate.

He said Malaysia was prepared to provide humanitarian aid to war victims, regardless of their nationalities, in the form of cash and food.

The Government, he said, had approved an initial allocation of \$100,000 to Jordan where the war victims were seeking refuge.

Dr Mahathir also urged Malaysians to join the

Government in helping the victims.

Meanwhile, the Movement for Peace in the Gulf urged the United States to stop its attack on Iraq, particularly on civilian sites.

Its chairman, Mr S.M. Mohamed Idris, said in a statement that innocent people had been killed as a result of the bombings by the United States.