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Mahathir - Kurds '''

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KUALA LUMPUR, April 10, (Bernama) -- Malaysia today approved financial aid totalling US\$100,000 to help the Kurds who have become refugees as a result of violence and uprising in Iraq, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The aid would be channelled through the Red Crescent Society, he told reporters after breaking the fast at the Tabung Haji headquarters here today.

+If necessary, we will increase the aid... but we are confident that the developed countries will be able to contribute more,+ he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir regretted that the Kurdish community had become the victims of violence, purely because they were influenced by the United States to stage an uprising against President Saddam Hussein after the ending of the Gulf war.

The Kurds became the victims of violence because they believed that the United States would help them against President Saddam, but the big power did not do so, he said.--more

♥10/04/22-48MST

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Mahathir - Kurds 2 Kuala Lumpur '''

+They staged the revolt without thinking of their own fate in the belief that they will get help from the U.S.

+America encouraged them to revolt, but unfortunately when the uprising took place help was not forthcoming,+ he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was better for other countries not to interfere in the internal matters of another country, let alone encourage a revolt.

He said at first the Iraqi army did not dare to use chemical weapons and aircraft against the Kurds because of warning from the United States which shot down two of its (Iraqi) aircraft.

But when no further action was taken, the Iraqi army continued its attacks on the Kurds, he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would not make an official protest to the Iraqi government on the matter although +we are saddened by the fate that had befallen the Kurdish community as a result of cruel action of the Iraqi army.

He said as a democratic country, Malaysia believed that a government should have the support of the people and +a government should not have acted in that way against its people.+

On the status of 80 Indonesian nationals from Aceh who asked for protection from Malaysia, he said so far the government had yet to ascertain whether they really ran away from violence in their own country or were illegal immigrants.

He said the government needed to study their background first before defining their status.

The Prime Minister said the government had already contacted the Indonesian Embassy here but had yet to make any decision on the matter.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also denied that Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan had come to see him at his office yesterday.

--Bernama

♥10/04/23-17MST