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Mahathir-Iraq

DR MAHATHIR CONDEMNS ANGLO-AMERICAN AIR RAIDS ON IRAQ

SHAH ALAM, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad condemned Friday's bombings of Iraq by British and United States warplanes.

"I am saddened by the raids as I have high expectations of the new U.S. administration," he told reporters here today.

Dr Mahathir said the new U.S. administration under President George W. Bush should have been allowed time to study the policies of the previous government on issues relating to Iraq.

Sadder still for him, the prime minister said, was that the air raids were launched purportedly for humanitarian reasons.

"But what was clear was that the raids they (the U.S) and Britain launched caused civilian fatalities and injuries not to soldiers.

"I didn't know that killing people is humanitarian," he said when asked to comment on the bombings of areas around Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, which killed two and injured 20 civilians.

Asked on the impending hike in water tariffs, Dr Mahathir said the move was unavoidable given the rising costs of other items.

"If water rates are not raised while other costs have gone up, this is not right," he said.

The proposed tariff hike was also in line with the last salary increase, Dr Mahathir said in reference to last year's 10 per cent pay increase for civil servants.

On the five per cent dividend declared by Tabung Haji, the pilgrims's fund board, which some depositors regarded as low, the prime minister said it was normal for a business entity like Tabung Haji to make gains or losses from its investments.

"This we have to accept. As such the dividend offered should be welcomed," he said.

He said: "When we do business, we cannot expect fixed income. When income is fixed, then it becomes riba (usury)."

Usury is unIslamic.

Asked whether there was a need to appoint an adviser to monitor losses suffered or profits gained from Tabung Haji's investments, Dr Mahathir said: "We have internal and external auditors. These people are professionals."

On the notion that Hindi films caused moral decadence among Malay/Muslim families, the prime minister said dealing with the issue would first require indepth and academic studies.

-- BERNAMA

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