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Ordeal

MAN LOST IN BEIJING HAPPY TO BE HOME

By: Jackson Sawatan

KOTA KINABALU, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- When 78-year-old Yong Ming Sing, who went missing for six days in Beijing, saw the picture of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Malaysian embassy there on Wednesday, he knew he had gone to the right place to seek assistance to return home.

He also knew that he would soon be with his family in his hometown, Penampang, near here, and that his ordeal after being separated from a 48-member tour group from Sabah, including his family members, was about to end.

"When I reached the embassy, I saw Dr Mahathir's picture, and I said happily

-- Yes...that is the picture of my Prime Minister," Yong said when met at the MCA Penampang Division office near here after returning from Beijing last night.

Recalling his 130-hour ordeal, Yong said he was separated from the tour group on the afternoon of Sept 26 when he joined the group for a visit to the Summer Palace, a popular tourist spot near Beijing city.

"While there, I took a walk around the area and then I realised that I was not with the group anymore. I waited outside the Summer Palace thinking that they would come back and fetch me but they did not turn up. I ended up sleeping at a five-foot way near the Summer Palace. It was raining at that time," he said.

Yong said: "I woke up the next day and decided to walk along a main road that might take me to Beijing city centre. The journey took a few hours and I fell asleep by the roadside in the evening and only woke up the next morning."

Yong said he reached Beijing city the third day and walked around the city where he met a hawker who helped him to find a place to sleep for two nights.

"When he asked where I came from, I said, from Api-Api (Kota Kinabalu) in Sabah but he did not know the place, so I bought a map and pointed at the Sabah state," he said.

On Oct 2, the man brought him to the Malaysian embassy where he was given a proper place to stay and subsequently sent home yesterday.

He said he was happy to return home and be with his family again but would not be going on any overseas trip in the future.

"Even if you give me a hundred thousand ringgit, I will never again go for an overseas trip. But if I have a chance to travel outside Sabah, it will only be within Malaysia," he said.

The group departed for Beijing from here on Sept 25 and arrived at about 6.30am and went to Tiananmen Square after breakfast and later checked in at the Mandarin Hotel.

Yong's daughter, Irene Yong, said just after lunch, they were taken on a coach to the Summer Palace and were told to reassemble by 4.30pm when they realised that Yong was not with them.

She said a representative of the tour agent refused to wait for her father despite their pleas and she and the rest of the Yong family were told not to worry as the police would bring him back to the hotel.

Not satisfied with the explanation, she and the other family members returned to the Summer Palace to search for Yong, but failed to locate him.

The family then lodged a report with the Beijing police and the Malaysian embassy on Sept 27 and then returned home on Sept 30.

She expressed dissatisfaction over the manner the tour organiser handled the incident, saying that the tour organiser should have granted their request to wait for Yong when they realised that he was missing. --  
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