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Syed Hamid-Protest

MALAYSIA PROTESTS AGAINST POOR TREATMENT

By: Zainal Abidin Bujal

SPLIT (Croatia), Feb 2 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will lodge a protest to the Italian government following the poor treatment accorded to a delegation of senior Malaysian Armed Forces officers by the state police at the Pisa Airport on January 31.

"We will seek the cooperation of the Foreign Ministry to pressure the Italian embassy in Kuala Lumpur to investigate and seek clarification on how the incident could have happened," Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar told Malaysian journalists at the Malcon 3 National Support Element (NSE) Headquarters at Kastel Sucurac, here today.

Syed Hamid arrived here last night to distribute Hari Raya hampers besides meeting and mingling with 1,053 members of the Malaysian armed forces at several locations (Malcon 3) serving with the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina.

However, he said, the form of the protest to be lodged depended on the outcome of investigations to be carried out by the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) and the Italian authorities.

During the incident, members of the Pisa state police refused to allow the Malaysian Armed Forces delegation led by Kluang 7th Brigade Commander, Brig-Jen Mohamed Zamri Ismail and accompanied by Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) Human Resources Director, Kapten Dakalan Karim, to leave the airport arrival hall to meet 115 officers and men of the RMN and their family to distribute Hari Raya hampers.

The RMN personnel are involved in the project to purchase Corvette vessels from Italy by the Malaysian Government at the Fincantieri shipyard in Pisa, since last year.

Both the Corvette warships are scheduled to be brought to Malaysia by the end of the year under the command of Kapten Roslan Mahmud.

The Pisa police authorities refused to allow the Malaysian Armed Forces delegation to leave on grounds that all members of the delegation comprising 115 military officers and 15 journalists, who landed on a Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) Charlie 130 aircraft, were wearing military uniform.

Syed Hamid explained that Mindef will lodge a complaint according to proper channels because the problem could have been avoided as Mindef had already informed about the arrival of the RMAF aircraft, and it is not uncommon for military personnel to wear uniform.

Syed Hamid is being accompanied by Army Chief, Jen. Datuk Seri Che Mat Noor Mat Arshad and Mindef Deputy Secretary General II, Datuk Syed Jaafar Syed Aznan, among others.

At a function at the NSE last night, Syed Hamid distributed 14 Raya hampers to members of Malcon 3 which were received by its commander, Lt.Kol.Rodzi Ibrahim.

Syed Hamid also conveyed Aidil Fitri messages from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali to the members of Malcon 3.

This morning, Syed Hamid visited Livnu Camp, the Malcon 3 Base in Bosnia Herzegovina, about 180 km from Split. This afternoon, he is scheduled to fly to Serajevo to pay a courtesy call on the Joint Chairman of Bosnia Herzegovina Dr Haris Silajdzic and break fast with the Muslim community there. -- BERNAMA

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