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Panel to ensure safety for Everest climbers

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today contingency plans would be drawn up to ensure the safety of Malaysian climbers making their ascent on Mount Everest in May.

He said a Crisis Management Committee would be set up to prepare for possible emergencies and monitor any situation that could jeopardise the safety of the climbers.

Among those expected to be on the committee are experts on mountain climbing from the Armed Forces, the Police Force and representatives from the Health Ministry.

Muhyiddin said the Ministry would hold a meeting next week to discuss the setting up of the committee.

He was speaking at a Press conference after receiving a courtesy call from 17 members of the Malaysia Everest Team 1997, led by expedition leader Noor Ramlle Sulaiman.

At the Press conference, Muhyiddin presented the Malaysian Mountaineering Association with RM980,000 as a donation towards the expedition. A total of RM1.3 million has been spent for the Malaysia Everest Project 1997.

The team will leave for Kathmandu, Nepal, on March 1 to begin preparations for the final assault on the summit of Mount Everest on May 10.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to send the team off on the Kemuncak Dunia (Top of the World) expedition.

Muhyiddin said the project had stirred the patriotic spirit of Malaysians of all races. He said the people should pray for the success of the project and the safe return of the climbers.

He added that to keep the nation informed on the expedition's latest developments, a secretariat would be set up in Kathmandu to receive information sent by Telekom Malaysia and RTM.

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