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Maluku-Shooting

MALAYSIAN HUMANITARIAN DELEGATION TO MALUKU SHOT AT

AMBON (MALUKU), Dec 25 (Bernama) -- A Malaysian delegation sending humanitarian aid to war-torn Maluku was shot at by unknown persons while on its way to Ambon in a boat yesterday.

Bernama reporter Mohamed Haikal Mohamed Isa and a photographer and cameraman from the national news agency were among the 20 people on board the boat.

"We were fortunate that none of the shots hit our boat," Mohamed Haikal said.

The delegation led by Dr Shamsul Anwar Sulaiman of Umno Youth was carrying medicines, foodstuff and RM100,000 cash to be distributed to the poor, mosques and welfare homes for Hari Raya.

It left for the town by boat after landing at Pattimura Airport, near here.

Shamsul Anwar, who is chairman of the Umno Youth International Affairs Bureau, said: "I'm not accusing anyone but I feel that there are parties opposing our presence here."

He said they probably thought that the aid was solely for the Muslim residents when in fact the foodstuff was handed over to the Ambon authorities through a representative of the governor.

Besides Umno Youth, the humanitarian mission, named "Sumbangsih Jiran Murni", was also participated by the Budi Penyayang Association, Mara Junior Science College Former Students' Association (Ansara) and representatives of the Indonesian embassy in Malaysia.

The delegation included Ansara president Mukriz Mahathir and officials from the Foreign and Defence ministries.

Shamsul Anwar said the humanitarian aid for the people of Maluku, especially the Muslims, should not be interpreted as an interference in the conflict between the Christians and Muslims here.

"It is a humanitarian mission. We believe that what we are doing is right," he said.

Despite being shot at, the Malaysian delegation continued with its journey here to meet the Muslims and representatives from Islamic organisations.

Its members prayed at Masjid Al-Falah, the main mosque and centre for Islamic activities, here.

They also presented cash, foodstuff and several copies of the Quran to the Maluku district Islamic Religious Council represented by its head, R.R Hassanusi.

Shamsul Anwar said the shooting incident would not affect future efforts to send humanitarian aid to Maluku.

Earlier, the Royal Malaysian Air Force C-130 aircraft carrying the aid arrived at Pattimura airport under tight security by the Indonesian security forces.

The Maluku governor's representative, Drs Paula B.Kenyaan, who received the aid, said the authorities were grateful for the contribution and did not expect Malaysians to care so much about developments in Maluku.

"We may not be able to reciprocate but what we can do is to pray for the wellbeing of Malaysians," she said.

-- BERNAMA

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