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TWO AIRCRAFT TO EVACUATE MALAYSIANS FROM SOLOMON ISLANDS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 13 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian government has agreed to send two Hercules aircraft to evacuate Malaysians in the Solomon Islands following civil strife in that country, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said there were about 200 Malaysians in Solomon Islands with some 20 Malaysian companies operating on the island, many of which are engaged in logging and plantation activities.

He said the two aircraft would leave for Solomon Islands tomorrow evening and stop over at Papua New Guinea before they execute the evacuation exercise.

Asked why Malaysia was mounting the evacuation, Syed Hamid said: "The situation is not clear, so it is better for us to take our people out."

Syed Hamid told reporters this at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang near here. He was among several ministers who were at the airport to receive Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who returned home from a week-long working trip to Japan.

Asked if any Malaysian had been evacuated, Syed Hamid said he was not aware of that.

Civil strife in the Solomon Islands erupted when the Malaita Eagles Force (MEF) rebels abducted Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu on Monday.

-- BERNAMA

HS YBY