

PM: Aid groups volunteered to help Afghans

By EMBUN MAJID
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CHANGLUN: The Malaysians who went to Pakistan to help the Afghan refugees did so voluntarily and were not pressured into it by the Government or international groups, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said the volunteers, who left the comfort of their homes and families, decided to do so in order to contribute to the well-being of the refugees whom they considered to be their brethren.

Despite the risks, when they learnt about the plight of the Afghan refugees, they felt that it was their obligation as Muslims to help out, he added.

"In this way, we can also promote good relationships with Muslims of other nations," he said before breaking fast with residents of Kampung Lembah Palas near here on Monday.

Present was Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The latest team of volunteers to go to Pakistan left on Sunday night.

They comprised members of the Umno Youth Humanitarian Mission and medical personnel.

Apart from sending volunteers, Malaysia had also sent various contributions in cash and kind for the refugees.

Dr Mahathir said donations had come not only from Muslims but the other com-

munities as well.

He said the Afghan refugees had warmly received the Malaysian volunteers and this showed that a good rela-

tionship had been established between them.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated the need to continue with such voluntary and charity efforts

locally as there were also poor and underprivileged people in Malaysia who needed help.

"Let us not forget that there are people in our country who

need our help," he said.

He urged philanthropists and others to work together with the Government to reduce the burden of the poor.