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MAF-Afghanistan

MAF MEDICAL TEAM LEAVES FOR PAKISTAN TO HELP AFGHAN REFUGEES

SUBANG, Dec 31 (Bernama) -- A medical team from the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) left for Pakistan today with over 27,000kg of medical and food supplies as well as clothes in a mission to help the Afghan refugees.

The team of 53 officers and men is led by Lt Kol Dr Jaseemudin Abu Bakar. Four of them are doctors and 20 paramedics while the others in take care of administration and security.

They left in two transport aircraft of the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) for Quetta, Pakistan enroute to a refugee camp in Chaman near the Pakistan-Afghan border.

On hand to send them "Malmedtim" off at the TUDM base here were Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Najib told reporters that the mission was the idea of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who felt that it could create a big impact in helping the Afghans who escaped from the war in their country.

He said both the Hercules C-130 planes would make stop at the Maldives and Muscat, Oman during the 14-hour flight to Quetta.

"We have received permission and confirmation from the Pakistani government. They welcome our intention to help the Afghan refugees," he said.

He said it cost Malaysia RM5 million to send and maintain the medical team for two months in Chaman.

Earlier in his speech prior to the team's departure, Najib said the crisis in Afghanistan should be a lesson to all Malaysians on the importance of peace for the well-being of a nation.

He said that efforts to strengthen the country's politics, economy and defence should not be viewed lightly especially in Malaysia's aspirations to become a model Islamic state.

Dr Jaseemudin, meanwhile, told reporters that the four doctors were anaesthetist, surgeon, gynaecologist and general practitioner.

He said the medical team would set up an operating theatre, capable of performing two major surgeries and five minor surgeries a day in addition to X-ray facilities, a laboratory and a 12-bed ward.

Dr Jaseemudin, who can speak Urdu, said he was told that there were some 45,000 refugees in Chaman and that temperature had dropped to 10 degrees below the freezing point.

Asked on how he felt about the mission: "I am proud and I am happy to be selected for this mission. I'll do my best. It's Malaysia Boleh."

-- BERNAMA

MAM AKT ABG