

Islamic countries must be strong in every aspect: Najib

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon: Islamic countries must have economic, political and military strength to be respected and be able to assist other Islamic nations.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak said Malaysia can afford to assist Afghanistan refugees in Pakistan because it has strength in these aspects.

"Once more, Malaysia has come forward to provide meaningful assistance to those in need," he said when sending off the 53-member Armed Forces Malaysian Medical Team (Malmedtim) to Pakistan, at the air force base here today.

Najib said the idea of

Malmedtim was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We already have a **team** from the NGOs and political parties, and Malmedtim will make our country's contribution more meaningful."

Najib said Malaysia is spending RM5 million on the mission, not including team members' allowance.

The team, which has experience in Bosnia, will have the capability to carry out major and minor surgery as it brings along 60,000lb of equipment.

It consists of 12 officers and four doctors.

Najib said the team will be heading to Chaman,

Pakistan, about 5km from the Afghanistan border where there are more than 40,000 refugees.

"Officially, there are 2.5 million Afghanistan refugees," he said, adding that the unofficial figure is estimated at about four million.

"Without our assistance, there will be a lot of lives lost, especially during the winter."

Najib also reminded Malaysians to appreciate peace while the country is still peaceful and before it is too late.

Malmedtim, led by Lt Col Dr Jaseemuddin Abu Bakar, left in two C-130 Hercules planes.