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Twins-Return

MALAYSIAN SIAMESE TWINS CAN RETURN HOME BEFORE RAYA

From Zulkefli Salleh

RIYADH, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Siamese twins, separated by Saudi Arabian doctors here, scored a double joy today for not only Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad paid a visit on them but they were also told they will be able to return home a week before Hari Raya Puasa.

The Prime Minister, who is on a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia, spent about 30 minutes with the four-year-old twins at the King Fahd National Guard Hospital VIP room converted into a temporary ward for the occasion.

Ahmad and Muhammmad, dressed in brown t-shirts and shorts, were full of joy when Dr Mahathir entered the room and shook hands with them.

"Apa khabar (How are you?)," Dr Mahathir asked the twin brothers and Ahmad, the elder, who seemed to be more alert replied "khabar baik (fine)".

Dr Abdullllah Al-Rabeeah, head of the medical and surgical teams which separated the conjoined twins in a 23-hour operation, told Dr Mahathir that the twins had done remarkably well.

In less than a month they had recovered all of their systems back to normal and they should be ready to go back to Malaysia a week before Hari Raya.

Dr Mahathir had thanked and congratulated Dr Abdullah and his team members and also the Saudi government who had borne all the expenses for the operation.

Asked by Malaysian reporters later whether he was impressed with the medical feat, Dr Mahathir said: "Of course I am impressed. As a doctor I know how difficult the operation was because it also involved separating organs shared by the twins."

Dr Abdullah also told reporters that at present the twins were eating normally and preferred mostly rice, chicken and soup, and Muhammed, in contrast to the last few weeks, now ate more than Ahmad.

According to him, their hearts, kidneys, liver and gastrointestinal systems were normal and they had started physiotherapy to allow their muscles to grow and become strong in preparation for walking.

"They can now stand for about 10 minutes and are getting stronger by the day," he said, adding measurements were taken last week for the artificial lower limb for both the twins.

He said the artificial limbs would be ready in three weeks.

He also said Muhammad, who is still on antibiotics treatment, would be able to do without it from tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir was also briefed on other services of the hospital and toured its various departments and facilities.

He expressed appreciation for the hospital's interest to enhance cooperation with Malaysia including in the recruitment of nurses.

Meanwhile, the twins' mother, Aishah Kanda said the two boys were very eager to return "but until then, they enjoy reading their favourite Malay stories and playing with toys given to them by Saudis and Malaysians."

--BERNAMA

ZS LES AO