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Agong-Investiture

SOCIAL WORKER, BUSINESSMAN, POLITICIAN AND ARTIST RECEIVE AWARDS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- A medical officer with the Malaysian Medical Relief Society (Mercy Malaysia), Datuk Dr Baba Mohamed Deni, was among 139 people who received awards today from the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail, in conjunction with his official birthday in June.

Dr Baba, 48, who received the Panglima Jasa Negara (PJN), which carries the title "Datuk", was among the Mercy Malaysia team who were fired upon by Iraqi gunmen in Baghdad on April 12.

The doctor was injured in his right hip and Mercy Malaysia president Datuk Dr Jemilah Mahmood was also injured during the attack in April, while their Syrian guide, Ghofran, and a pharmacy worker of the Al-Quds Hospital, Hussein, were killed.

Dr Baba is now able to walk with a crutch but has to continue physiotherapy for a full year, by which time he hopes to recover fully.

American businessman Datuk Nicholas Zefferys, MIC Wanita chief Senator Jaya Partiban and composer Suhaimi Mohd. Zain were also among those honoured at the investiture at Istana Negara.

Zefferys received the Panglima Jasa Negara (Honorary), which also carries the title "Datuk", while the MIC Wanita chief was awarded the Johan Mangku Negara, and Suhaimi received the Johan Setia Mahkota.

Met after the investiture, Dr Baba said he was hoping to make a trip to Palestine with Dr Jemilah, when he was able to walk better.

The volunteer said he has no regrets.

"I see it as a challenge," he said. "I have to believe it is fate (takdir). Injuries can happen anywhere."

Asked about the current situation in Iraq, he said, "As a Muslim, I feel sad that a rich (Muslim) country, the second richest in oil in the world, has fallen into the hands of non-Muslims. From the aspect of religion, this is a loss."

He said he supported the comment by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that if Muslim nations were united, used their resources and pursued science and technology, they could be at par with the West.

"I hope the fate of the country will be decided by the Iraqi people," he said, adding that "We can help them rebuild."

He said the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) could play a role in the recovery.

Zefferys, the President and CEO of Applied Consulting & Engineering Sdn. Bhd. who was a former president of the American Chamber of Commerce, has promoted trade between the United States and Malaysia during his 10 years in Malaysia.

"There were some difficult patches when relations were not very strong," he said, recalling former American Vice-President Al Gore's visit to Kuala Lumpur in 1998.

"Things chilled after that," he said. "We all felt the embarrassment and it had an impact on relations."

Zefferys said he lobbied in Washington D.C. and defended Malaysia and its leadership in hearings.

Receiving the award has encouraged him to apply for permanent residency in the country, he said.

Three others received the Johan Setia Mahkota (including Suhaimi), 24 the Kesatria Mangku Negara, 49 the Ahli Mangku Negara and 60 the Pingat

Pangkuan Negara.
-- BERNAMA
SMO AHH SRI