

05/03/2005

Mahathir-Aceh

MAHATHIR SAYS AID TO ACEH MUST CONTINUE

LANGKAWI, March 5 (Bernama) -- Aid to Aceh must continue until the tsunami survivors there are able to stand on their own feet, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said based on briefings to him by volunteers who returned from Aceh, there were still survivors in the interior parts of the province who needed direct aid.

"Food supply must not be broken until they can manage on their own," he told reporters after welcoming a 23-man aid mission that returned home after sending aid supplies to Aceh by ferry at the Kuah Jetty here today.

Dr Mahathir said besides food, plant seeds were also needed so that survivors could resume farming.

"Contributions from donors are much appreciated so that we can send more food supplies there," he said.

The head of the mission Zainal Rashid said the team would send another 600 tonnes of food, medicines and plant seeds via ferry to Aceh soon and added that they also had identified two schools that needed to be rebuilt.

On the Langkawi International Air and Maritime Exhibition (LIMA '05) in December, Dr Mahathir said he was confident it would be successful following the encouraging response shown.

He said with the cooperation of all parties, LIMA '05 would attract more tourists to the biennial event.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was reported as saying LIMA '05 was an important event in the world defence exhibition calendar and that more than 14,000 sq ft of exhibition space had been booked.

Touching on the Langkawi Ironman 2005 triathlon meet which saw a poor response, Dr Mahathir said the pullout by participants this year was due to several factors including the tsunami disaster.

Only 38 triathletes from overseas took part this year compared to 430 previously.

-- BERNAMA

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