

Hisham: Najib did what Obama, Putin couldn't
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Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein has defended his cousin, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, declaring that Najib succeeded where US President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin failed.

Hishammuddin said the manner in which Najib handled the MH17 tragedy showed that he is a "courageous" leader, who negotiated with the separatist forces in Ukraine to bring back the remains of those who perished in the incident.

"If Najib did not take the brave stand of facing the separatists, I may not be standing here today to organise the arrival of the corpses (of Malaysians)," he told reporters.

"Ask if Obama can do it, ask if Putin is able to do it," he added.

Response to stinging criticism

Hishammuddin said this in response to former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's stinging criticism of Najib.

"If that cannot be valued by the people, it is very saddening," he said.

However, Hishammuddin added, he still respected Mahathir, even though he disagreed with him.

"Mahathir is ever willing to give his opinion but that does not mean we agree with everything he says," he said.

However, he did not want to be too critical of Mahathir because the former prime minister has his own opinions and principles.

Hishammuddin was speaking at a press conference at the Defence Ministry shortly after he met some top newspaper editors in the country in order to prepare to receive the bodies of those who perished in the MH17 crash.

He asked all Malaysians to hold a two-minute silence as soon as the bodies are transferred into mortuary vans, sometime between 10.30am to 11.30am on Friday.

The ceremony to pay final respects to the bodies will involve 16 victims of MH17- six Muslims and 10 non-Muslims.

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