

Malaysia Sends Rescue Workers To Japan
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PEKAN -- Malaysia is rushing disaster assistance personnel, sniffer dogs and doctors to help with search and rescue efforts in Japan where an earthquake and tsunami yesterday left more than 1,000 people dead and several more missing.

Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, who announced this today, said 15 members of the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART), several doctors and medical assistants and six sniffer dogs would leave for Japan in two C-130 aircraft at 6pm today.

"This (assistance) demonstrates our sympathy and support for the government and people of Japan," he told reporters after a visit to the Universiti Malaysia Pahang campus here.

Najib said all Malaysians in Japan were reported to be safe.

Asked whether the government would evacuate Malaysians from Japan in view of a possible radiation leak from nuclear power plants following the earthquake, the prime minister said the Japanese government would have to determine whether there was any danger from the plants.

An 8.9-magnitude earthquake struck Japan yesterday afternoon and triggered a 10-metre high tsunami which lashed onto the northeastern part of the country, resulting in up to 1,000 people killed in the twin disasters.

Najib said the government would monitor the effects of the disasters on the country's economy and prices of goods.

He also said that efforts were being made to increase the supply of essential goods through the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry and Felda besides encouraging competition among industries with a view to reducing prices.

The Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry had been instructed to monitor traders who raised the prices of goods too high, he said.

"We do not want inflation to go up too much. It will be manageable at two per cent to 2-1/2 per cent," he added.

(Bernama)