

THE STAR

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Aid team comes home

Members of convoy to Palestine back safe after ordeal

SEPANG: Nine Malaysians, who were part of the largest Viva Palestina humanitarian aid convoy, arrived home safely yesterday.

The team, which was led by Matthias Chang and included four members of the Perdana Global Peace Organisation and a Yayasan Al-Bukhari representative, arrived at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) at 2.05pm.

Organisation chairman and former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali were among those present to welcome the team.

"None of us was injured. We were determined not to return home until and unless we entered Gaza and delivered the aid supplies. That we have accomplished," Chang told reporters.

After weeks of delay, the convoy was finally allowed to enter the besieged Palestinian enclave with more than a million dollars worth of medical, food and educational supplies for its people.

Malaysia donated four trucks of humanitarian aid and an ambulance vehicle worth some RM541,000 to the Gaza Elwafa Hospital.

Chang said Dr Mahathir's aid and support through phone calls had been very assuring to many members of the convoy during the journey.

"Efforts by Datin Sen Rosmah Mansor in sending all the notes to various counterparts in Egypt and the Red Crescent also alleviated some of the most difficult problems that we encountered," he said.

Despite the ordeal suffered by the convoy, Chang described the Malaysian team as "very united, determined and dignified".

"The journey itself was not very difficult, but what was most difficult was the waiting in between various stops," he said.

The Viva Palestina humanitarian aid convoy, which began its long journey from London on Dec 6, last year, crossed the Rafah border into Gaza last Thursday.

Some 150 vehicles of the total 220 are now in the hands of Palestinians living in Gaza, which has been under seige by Israeli soldiers.

- Bernama



Back in Malaysia: Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah chatting with the humanitarian convoy members (from right) Al-Bukhari representative Lt Col (R) Rafie Khatab, Chang and Shamsul Akmar of Perdana global Peace at the KLIA yesterday. — Bernama