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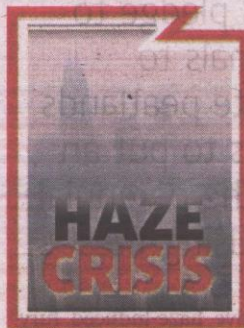
Jakarta opens doors

People wearing masks in Palembang, southern Sumatra, Indonesia, yesterday. AFP pic

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MISSION: Malaysia deploys aircraft following PM's order, says Hisham

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INDONESIA has finally opened its doors to neighbouring countries to help battle forest fires in Sumatra and Kalimantan, which have been said to be the main cause of the haze.

Yesterday, Malaysia and Singapore received requests for aid to put out the fires, with both nations agreeing to immediately send help.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) would deploy assets to Palembang, Sumatra, by yesterday evening at the latest.

He said the order was given by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on Wednesday, following a call from Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

"I received a call from Najib yesterday (Wednesday) and he instructed me to coordinate help to put out the forest fires in Indonesia.

"The order came after Najib received a request from the Indonesian president for assistance in battling fires in Palembang.

"Following the instruction, I contacted my counterpart in Indonesia,

in areas identified by Indonesian authorities.

Hishammuddin said the operation would be coordinated by RMAF and MMEA.

He said an inter-ministry and agency meeting would be held soon to discuss other forms of aid that Malaysia could offer.

It was reported that Indonesia had earlier turned down Malaysia's offer to help put out the fires responsible for the haze.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar was quoted as saying his ministry, the Defence Ministry and agencies were prepared to help Indonesia.

However, the latter had not been receptive to aid.

Yesterday, Bloomberg News agency reported that Singapore would send "aid, ranging from a C-130 for cloud seeding to high-resolution satellite images tracking hotspots".

The agency quoted Joko as saying Indonesia needed aircraft to transport between 12 tonnes and 15 tonnes of water to battle the fires.

Ryamizard Ryacudu, and Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi to discuss the matter," he said at the ministry here.

He said for the time being, the focus of the requested assistance was aircraft capable of putting out fires in large areas.

"For the mission, the government will send a Bombardier CL415MP aircraft, which will be deployed there by today (yesterday)."

He said the amphibious aircraft, with the capacity to deliver 6,137 litres of water in 12 seconds, would conduct fire-suppressing operations

Najib: KL ready to help

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has welcomed Indonesia's decision to cooperate with other nations in addressing the haze.

He said Malaysia was more than willing to help Indonesia deal with the issue.

"I welcome Indonesia's move to cooperate with Malaysia and other nations to address the forest fires that are causing the haze.

"Malaysia is ready to assist Indonesia in dealing with the haze for the benefit of all," he said on Facebook yesterday.