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**THE END OF THE MALAYSIAN FIELD HOSPITAL OPERATION
AT COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH**

Kuala Lumpur

The Government of Malaysia had established the Malaysian Field Hospital (MFH) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in November 2017 for the purpose of providing humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees who have fled to Bangladesh following the conflict in Rakhine, Myanmar. This mission was a short-term plan to lessen the burden and stabilise the condition of the refugee camp especially in the healthcare aspect of the Rohingya refugees.

The MFH was manned by 56 personnel on a rotational basis which consisted of 20 Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) officers, including eight physicians, 30 members of other ranks of the Royal Medical Corps, and six civilian nurses. Until March 2020, the MAF had sent five medical teams to the MFH.

The MFH became the primary focus for Rohingya refugees to seek treatment since it was the only field hospital capable of providing Level 3 services at that time, even though it was located outside the refugee camp. Among the services provided were general surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics and gynecology, anesthesia, x-rays, and other key treatments such as family health, emergency, dental and radiology as well as laboratory.

Throughout the MFH's period of operation, the medical personnel were often exposed to health and safety risks, such as the spread of COVID-19 and the threat of other infectious diseases such as hepatitis, malaria, and tuberculosis as well as the increase in criminal cases among Rohingya refugees and locals.

The resolve of the Government in this matter and the high commitment of the medical team had enabled the MFH to gain the World Health Organization (WHO)'s recognition as the best, most well-equipped, and most trusted Level 3 Hospital, and subsequently became a referral hospital in the district.

The excellent level of medical and health services had prompted many Rohingya refugees and locals to seek treatment at the MFH. Throughout the operating period from November 2017 to March 2020, the total number of patients treated at the MFH was 108,038 people. MFH personnel also performed more than 3,500 surgeries, including 900 high-risk surgeries. In November 2018, the number of patients per month had reached up to 8,763 people, which was the highest monthly number recorded since the MFH's establishment. However, the total number of patients monthly had shown a downward trend, in which only 1,690 people sought treatment at the MFH in February 2020.

The downward trend in the number of cases and patient attendance was due to the stabilized situation in the refugee camp area, and the improved health conditions of the Rohingya refugees since chronic diseases had been treated and many surgical procedures were successfully performed. Moreover, there are six additional field hospitals established by the Government of Turkey and other international NGOs such as Mèdecins Sans Frontières (MSF), HOPE Foundation, MSF Spain, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, and Friendship which are located within the refugee camp. The increase in the number of field hospitals has given more options and access to healthcare services to

Rohingya refugees and locals who have since reduced their dependency on the MFH which was located outside the refugee camp.

Based on current developments, the Government has decided to end the MFH operation earlier in 2020 as compared to the original operational mandate which ends in December 2021. The establishment of the MFH had succeeded in achieving its objectives and this withdrawal neither affects bilateral relations between Malaysia and Bangladesh nor the country's image.

As a responsible member of the international community, Malaysia is deeply concerned about the Rohingya humanitarian crisis and will continue to play a role in highlighting Rohingya issues at regional and international levels, including through bilateral and multilateral platforms, particularly in finding long-term solutions to these issues.

The repatriation of MAF medical personnel has enabled the Armed Forces Hospitals (HAT) to operate at their full capacity nationwide. At the same time, they can be deployed locally as part of whole-of-government effort in combatting the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic which is currently showing an upward trend.



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