Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) - Sri Lankans are in need of humanitarian assistance to rebuild their lives shattered by years of civil war, according to the Global Peace Malaysia (GPM) mission team to Sri Lanka which returned recently.

(18.07.2003)
In a postmission Press briefing at Quality Hotel City Centre today, its relief and operations director Khairil Annuar Khalid said the living conditions were extremely bad.

"The recent floods and mudslides have compounded the devastation of the wartorn country.

"Homes and buildings are in ruins," said Khairil.

He said the indiscriminate use of land mines in rural areas had maimed many children.

"Some of the mines are as small as the dial of a wristwatch. Children are particularly vulnerable to the small colourful mines, which they pick up and play with."

On efforts to curb the threat of land mines, Khairil said they were sourcing funds to purchase Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment which would enable them to identify the exact location of land mines.

He said GPM was focusing on raising awareness of the dangers of land mines among the locals.

"Land mine survivors relate their experiences to ensure that the people, especially children, are aware of such dangers. Such a programme can help reduce injuries and deaths by about 45 per cent," he said.

Asked about the cost of the GPS, he said eight might cost between US$300 (RM1,140) and US$1,500 (RM5,700).

On the funds needed for the whole mission, Khairil said about RM500,000 was needed to help re-build infrastructure and organise income-generating activities.

"We would be grateful if other Malaysian non-governmental organisations can join us in this effort."

The three-member team comprising Khairil, Datin Zaiton Palil and Bibi Hatflah Muinuddin left for Sri Lanka on July 4. Another team will leave for Sri Lanka in mid-October.

GPM is a coalition of 77 Malaysian NGOs formed in 2001. It aims to bring humanitarian relief to victims of war and disasters worldwide.

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