

'Foster spirit of gotong-royong'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on service clubs to foster the *gotong-royong* spirit in their charitable activities to minimise the dependence of the needy on outside help.

He said these clubs should not choose the easy way out by relying on fund-raising and fund-distribution and should instead find ways of stimulating self-help amongst the needy.

The Prime Minister said it was better for a club to participate in *gotong-royong* together with its beneficiaries "than to merely make a gift of a ready-made facility".

"A *gotong-royong* project not only makes the result of the effort available to the recipients but helps to inculcate the spirit of service which is the *raison d'être* of the service clubs," he said at a dinner to mark the 48th conference of the Rotary District 330.

He said while the Government appreciated the role that gifts and donations played in helping to better the living conditions of the needy, "we should be careful not to nurture an attitude of over-dependence on outside help."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government encouraged public participation in rendering services or implementing projects for the benefit of the public.

"There are times when projects are implemented in this country on a ringgit-to-ringgit basis, that is, the Government contributes a dollar for every dollar raised for a project by the people in the locality."

"The Government does not really encourage this because it may be caught up in expenditure not budgeted for."

"This does not mean a lack of appreciation on the part of the Government. It is simply because certain budgetary procedures are necessary if public funds are to be properly administered," he added.

About 600 Rotarians from Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Thailand attended the dinner on the first-day of the two-day Rotary convention.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said in spite of increased literacy, astounding scientific, technological and material progress everywhere and better international relations, global suffering has increased.

"This is where I see social organisations as an effective vehicle towards achieving order — not just social order, but also economic and political order."

"There is a lot that social organisations can do to awaken the conscience of society. For that is basically what is missing — conscience."

Earlier in the day, Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah a Ro-

tarian himself, opened the conference at the Bangunan Risa.

He said there were plenty of statistics to highlight "the chasm that yawns between the affluent and the poor."

"But statistics alone cannot convey the poignancy of individual human suffering."

"Mankind is not after all a heap of anonymous ants. We are men, women, children — with names, identities, emotions and hungers. As Finance Minister I am familiar with statistics. I deal with them day in and day out — especially in this recession — until my head spins."

Tengku Razaleigh said there must be change to bring about a new order in the conduct of human affairs, "an order in which compassion, fairness and justice find an appropriate place."