

21/06/1997

Concerts by Palestinian children from Lebanon to raise funds

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Malaysians can help ease the sufferings of Palestinian women and children during an upcoming visit and charity concerts involving 80 Palestinian children from Lebanon.

The visit, from Aug 5 to Sept 3, is organised by the Malaysian Sociological Research Institute and Beit-Atfal As-Samoud, a welfare body for Palestinians in Lebanon, with the help of the National Unity and Social Development Ministry.

National Unity and Social Development Minister Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail said a dinner and charity concert would be held on Aug 8 at the PWTC here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, patron of the visit, will attend the concert, she told a Press conference today.

Zaleha said proceeds of the concert, featuring a Palestinian folkloric group as well as artistes from WEA and BMG record companies, would go towards MSRI's fund for Palestinian women and children.

The targeted collection is RM800,000. There would also be one show at Dataran Merdeka on Sept 1.

The children, aged from seven to 19 years old, will visit Federal Territory, Sabah, Selangor, Kedah and possibly Perak. They will also undergo medical examination during the visit.

MSRI president Dr Alijah Gordon urged Malaysians to join "in any of the functions" during the visit so they could better understand the mindset of the children.

"These children have never had any childhood or enjoyed anything.

"These are children whose fathers have been killed, blinded or maimed, whose uncles and brothers were killed."

Beit-Atfal As-Samoud means "Children of the Steadfast" because their fathers were steadfast to the last.

This would be the second such visit since 1990, when 30 Palestinian children came to Malaysia with the help of MSRI. Proceeds from that visit resulted in the setting up of a Malaysian Gifted Learning Centre.

Funds were needed not only to set up such centres but also to continue providing services to those in need.

The 80 children are among 388 in Lebanon whose daily needs are sponsored by Malaysians.

Gordon said that since 1987, Malaysians had contributed more than RM10 million to the Palestinian cause through MSRI.

Zaleha also launched a logo for the visit and accepted two RM100,000 cheques for the concert from its main sponsors, YTL Corporation Bhd and Denko Bhd.

Other major sponsors are the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, which is bearing the cost of the dinner and charity concert, as well as Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia, which are partially sponsoring the travel costs of the group.

Those interested in making a general contribution or attending the charity concert can contact MSRI at 03-2430032 or fax 03-2433382.

Tables are going for a minimum of RM30,000, RM20,000 and RM10,000 each.

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