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Umno-Moro

UMNO DELEGATES DONATE TO HELP MOROS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- The Umno general assembly here today donated to Yayasan Sarang Bangun, a special foundation set up to help the orphans and widows of former Moros National Liberation Front (MNLF) fighters in Mindanao, southern Philippines.

Umno permanent chairman Tan Sri Sulaiman Ninam Shah launched the donation drive during the debate on the motion on economy.

Sulaiman was the first person to donate, followed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Umno president, deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the vice-presidents and supreme council members.

The collection was launched following an appeal by the foundation's representative in Malaysia, Ali Mamat, a Bernama news editor, to Dr Mahathir two days ago.

The announcement caught delegates by surprise and some, including Anwar, had to borrow from their colleagues.

Anwar was seen whispering to Dr Mahathir who then handed him some money and was heard saying in jest "he owes (me)" and asking his deputy "when are you going to pay back."

At the same time several donation boxes were passed round to the delegates.

Dr Mahathir will hand over the collection to Ali when the assembly resumes in the afternoon.

The foundation based in Zamboanga City, Mindanao, was founded by a Moro social worker, Haji Edward Iblah Lim, upon realising that the 28-year armed conflict between the MNLF and the Philippine government troops had caused untold sufferings to the Moro Muslims.

Ali said the conflict, which ended with the signing of the peace agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine government last September, had left at least 10,000 wives of former MNLF fighters widowed and 50,000 children orphaned.

The foundation had taken the initiative to build a school in Zamboanga City for the orphans and vocational workshops for the widows and the Umno contribution would be used to renovate the school and buy a plot of land for additional school buildings, Ali said. -- BERNAMA

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