

M'sians get N. Korea award for relief work

KUALA LUMPUR: North Korea yesterday presented the *Order of Friendship Second Class* award to three Malaysians who were directly involved in relief efforts to help famine victims there.

The three recipients were Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Datuk Ong Tee Keat, Malaysian Industrial Development Authority deputy director-general Datuk J. Jegathesan and Zaitun Bhd executive chairman Datuk Seri Mutiara Mohd Eusuff Teh.

Acting ambassador Ji Jaesuk presented the awards to the recipients at a simple ceremony at the embassy here.

Ji said the prestigious award was the highest decoration normally awarded to high-level figures from a foreign country who had performed distinguished exploits and contributed to the development of friendly relations with the North Korean government.

He said Ong was responsible

for co-ordinating the donation of RM1.2mil from the MCA through the Malaysian Red Crescent Society, as well as 5,000 tonnes of rice from the Buddhist Charity Organisation of Taiwan.

He added that Jegathesan, co-ordinator of the Sathya Sai Baba Organisation, organised the sending of 90 tonnes of foodstuff and 3,000 tonnes of relief supplies, while Mohd Eusuff donated RM1mil through the Red Crescent.

Ji said his government would also be presenting the *Order of Friendship First Class* to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad early next month.

Later, Ong said he would like to share the award with Malaysians who had contributed to the famine victims.

Jegathesan said his award was the result of the concerted effort of all concerned.

Mohd Eusuff said he was honoured to get the award.