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Dr M: Noble values help increase resilience

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the noble values of a caring society possessed by Malaysians of all races had increased the nation's resilience in battling the current economic problems.

Dr Mahathir also expressed gratitude that in the present situation, many among the rich had made contributions to the less fortunate, regardless of whether they were Muslims or otherwise.

"God willing, as long as we can retain these values, we will be able to withstand the pressure," Dr Mahathir said after receiving donations on behalf of the the Federal Territory Muslim Orphans' Welfare Association at the Tabung Haji headquarters.

A total of 398 orphans, including 20 non-Muslims, later received schooling and Hari Raya assistance totalling RM142,000. This was presented by the Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman and chairman of the association Datuk Ahmad Razali Mohd Ali were also present.

This is the seventh time the Prime Minister has attended the presentation.

The Hari Raya gift is worth RM140 each, while those in primary school get schooling assistance of RM200, and those in the secondary school RM250.

Dr Mahathir, in his speech, also touched on the present economic problems, the success in the fight against poverty, and how the aim of achieving developed nation's status by 2020 had encountered a setback.

"We may not have been rich before but we had a decent life.

"The poverty level, which was once at 55 per cent, was brought down to seven per cent, and we were able to provide assistance to the poor."

He said Malaysians were united despite the current problems and that the Government, on its part, would draw up strategies to safeguard the interests of the people so that they could lead decent lives.

Dr Mahathir added that in Malaysia, non-Muslims would contribute towards fund-raising drives organised by Muslims, including for the purpose of building mosques. Likewise, Muslims should contribute towards efforts started by non-Muslims, he said.

Since its establishment in 1989, the association has organised 17 donation drives raising RM1.02 million.

Among those who contributed today was the Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers (Bakti).

Bakti, which was represented by its welfare committee chairman, Toh Puan Dr Aishah Ong, contributed RM20,000.

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