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PM surprise guest at charity function

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Participants in the 5th annual charity walk/jog/wheel-a-thon had a pleasant surprise today when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad dropped by unexpectedly at the event at Dataran Merdeka.

"I came as I heard the organising committee wants to donate money to the Government," he told participants and the organisers.

The organisers, the Spastic Children's Association of Selangor and Federal Territory and the Selangor Welfare Council, pledged RM50,000 for the National Special Fund set up by the Government to help increase the country's reserves and overcome economic problems.

Dr Mahathir received the pledge from Spastic Children's Association president Datuk Lam Peng Chong.

"I'd like to thank everyone for their kind donations. In Malaysia, we never fail to come up with any amount of money for donations.

"On behalf of the Government, I would like to say thank you very much," Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were literally swamped by participants asking for their autographs.

Lam said proceeds from the charity event totalled more than RM300,000.

"It was decided that 80 per cent of the proceeds will go back to the 36 non-governmental charity organisations who collected the donations through their donation collection cards while the rest will go to the organising committee.

"But since the organising committee did not have to come up with so much money to organise the event, thanks to our sponsors, we decided to give the rest of the 20 per cent to the further education certificate course for the disabled programme, conducted by four non-Governmental organisations and affiliates with the Christchurch University of New Zealand and the National Special Fund," he said.

The Spastic Children's Association collected the most donations, totalling RM52,500, the Bethany Home for Epileptic Children came second with RM23,000 and The Monfort Boys Town third with RM21,762.95.

Earlier, the event patron Datuk Paduka Dr Saleha Mohd Ali flagged off 1,139 participants who took part in various categories.

The able bodied were divided into six categories; category A (Men), category B (Women), category C (Children-Boys), category C (Children-Girls), category D (Senior citizens-Men) and category F (senior citizens-Women).

The disabled were divided into eight categories: physically handicapped, blind, spastic, deaf, mentally handicapped, severely disabled and needs assistance, wheelchair and little people.

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