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RM921,000 donated so far to special fund

MALAYSIANS have contributed some RM921,000 to the special fund set up to strengthen the country's reserves, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Wong See Wah told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said many corporate organisations and individuals have also pledged to donate another RM720,000.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had announced the setting up of the fund on Feb 9.

Wong was replying to an oral question from Chia Kwang Chye (BN-Bukit Bendera).

Of the amount received so far, Wong said about RM438,930 was in the form of cash, RM300,000 in precious stones while another RM182,000 was in the form of gold. The amount of gold received was 4.4kg.

"The reason for us to set up the fund is to allow the people to donate to strengthen the country's reserves. It is a way for them to show their patriotism," he said.

He said the setting up of the fund did not mean that the Government did not have sufficient funds in its foreign reserves.

"The Government still has sufficient funds to manage the country. The fund was set up because the people wanted to help the country overcome its economic problems."

To a supplementary question from Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjong) on why less than a million ringgit was collected so far, Wong said this was because there was only one central collection unit.

"The amount collected so far would have been higher if we have a huge network to collect contributions but we want to have transparency," he said.

To another question from Lim on whether Ministers and Deputy Ministers had made contributions to the fund by selling their properties overseas, Wong asked: "Have you (Lim) sold your properties overseas to donate to the fund?"

He said the Government had introduced many other measures to overcome the problems.

"Let us not forget that the fund is one of the many ways for us to solve our economic problems. We are not entirely dependent on the fund," Wong added.

He said the fund was under the control of the Treasury. The Accountant-General had been appointed to manage its operations.

Those who wished to donate in ringgit or foreign currencies could do so at any Bank Simpanan Nasional or Bank Islam offices.

Those who wish to donate their jewellery can register them at any Bank Islam or Bank Kerjasama Rakyat Malaysia offices.

Wong said both these banks were only allowed to collect jewellery if they had the Ar-rahn schemes.

"The people are also allowed to make donations to the fund in other forms. All they have to do is to contact the Treasury," he said.

The fund would be operational from March 6 to April 6 only.

"However, the Government will still accept donations after that."

(END)