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Unclaimed gold items go to Special National Fund

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Gold items seized and gazetted by the Federal Government but not claimed by their owners will go to the Special National Fund set up to help strengthen the country's reserves.

The Finance Ministry's parliamentary secretary Datuk Dr Shafie Mohd Salleh said to date, unclaimed items, including jewellery, were estimated at thousands of ringgit.

He said seized items left by inmates of detention centres were kept by the various government departments like the Royal Customs and Excise Department, the police and the detention centres.

In two weeks, the fund was expected to receive some 100 kg of gold items.

Shafie said the Government still had enough to manage, but the fund was set up because people wanted to help the country.

"We want the people to donate to strengthen the country's reserves. It is a way for them to show their patriotism," he said.

He said this after receiving a total of RM4,403, US\$100 (RM380) and an assortment of jewellery weighing 343.29 grammes from the Indian Progressive Front.

Also present to witness the presentation were Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik and IPF president Senator M.G. Pandithan.

In another development, the Treasury deputy secretary-general Datuk Syed Danial Syed Ahmad said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali had donated jewellery and foreign currencies to the tune of RM125,000.

He said Dr Mahathir had donated foreign currencies from the various countries worth RM15,000 while Dr Siti Hasmah gave foreign currencies valued at RM40,000 and a set of diamonds costing RM70,000. The items would be auctioned.

"Those who buy the items will be given special certificates with the Prime Minister's signature."

Syed Danial said about RM2.6 million, including eight kg of gold worth more than RM400,000 and RM300,000 in precious stones, had been collected for the fund.

He said the response showed the people's commitment to help the country to strengthen its foreign reserves.

In view of the encouraging response, he said, the campaign would be extended to cover all States.

"Johor, Penang, Perak and Selangor have have so far shown interest in the campaign."

The Treasury will accept all donations in the form of jewellery, property and valuable items, while the Inland Revenue Board will issue receipts.

Dr Mahathir had announced the setting up of the fund on Feb 9. The fund was under the control of the Treasury while the Accountant-General had been appointed to manage its operations.

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