

Festive tribute to troops

PM's wife recites poem for those on Raya duty

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KUALA LUMPUR: Accompanied by music from an acoustic guitar and a violin, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali captivated officers from the army, navy and air force with a poem by the late Datuk Dr Usman Awang yesterday.

The poem titled *Janjiku Bila Kau Pergi* (My Promise When You Go) was a tribute to members of the Armed Forces who would be on duty during Hari Raya.

Earlier, Dr Siti Hasmah, who is chairman of Bakti (the Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers Charity and Welfare Organisation) reminded Malaysians that they were lucky to be celebrating the festive season peacefully unlike many war-torn countries which depended on the generosity of the others for survival.

She also called on the wives of those who had been called for duty to remain determined and look after their families without the presence of their husbands.

"Their responsibilities are as heavy as the husband's," she said.

She added that she admired those who maintained a cheerful disposition and good moral values during trying times.

Later, Dr Siti Hasmah led a group of 63 sponsors who donated foodstuff and cash to Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Armed Forces Chief Jen Tan Sri Mohd Zahidi Zainuddin, to be distributed to those who would be unable to celebrate Hari Raya with their families.

Najib said that this year, a total of 14,650 troops would be spending Hari Raya without their families, as they would be stationed at various military outposts around the country and also in other countries - such as Sierra Leone, Republic of Congo and Ethiopia - as United Nations peacekeepers.

He said that this year's cash collection amounted to RM212,300 compared with RM135,000 donated last year.

Also present were Bakti deputy chairman Datin Seri Endon Mahmood - the wife of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor,

army chief Jen Tan Sri Mat Hashim Hussein, navy chief Laksamana Tan Sri Datuk Abu Bakar Abdul Jamal and air force chief Jen Datuk Suleiman Mahmud.