

RM3m in Raya cheer for the poor

Recipients from all religions will get RM100 each

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By Seema Viswanathan

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: The government will give out nearly RM3 million in raya money to 28,950 hardcore poor of all religions around the country.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that each person will receive RM100 this festive season.

"We (the government) have some extra money and we want to help the poor celebrate the coming holidays along with those who are more fortunate," he said.

He was speaking to reporters after handing out raya money to the poor from all 11 parliamentary constituencies in Selangor and the Federal Territory.

Handouts for the poor in the other states will start simultaneously and will be completed in three days, before Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

The government has allocated RM15,000 for each parliamentary constituency where 150 people will be picked by the local government officers and MP's offices, to receive the money.

Earlier, Mahathir told the recipients that Malaysians are lucky because there have been spared the economic and social problems faced by those in other countries due to the global economic slowdown.

"We are safe here. People are happily spending money at shopping complexes. They can afford to

celebrate Hari Raya, Christmas and the New Year.

"Even in the richest country, people are losing their jobs and having financial problems," he said.

Mahathir noted that unlike some countries, the poor in Malaysia do not suffer from starvation.

"They just can't celebrate the festivities as grandly as the others.

That is why we are giving out the *duit raya* this year."

Mahathir also asked the people to be patient with the government in its implementation of projects for the poor.

On complaints that the money allocated by the government was not distributed, he said there are strict procedures to be observed.