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Dr M give aid assurance to poor

JITRA, Thurs. - Poor people in the country who have not received assistance from the Government are mostly those who have yet to be identified, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Saying that all the less fortunate in Malaysia will receive help regardless of race and religion, Dr Mahathir added that the Government was currently spreading Hari Raya cheer by providing cash donations to the poor.

"We will not be able to help every poor person in the country, but once we identify them, we will help them," Dr Mahathir said at breaking of fast at the Al A'la mosque here today.

He said poor people in Malaysia were fortunate because there is no shortage of assistance.

"In addition to Government help through agencies like Risda, other bodies like Bank Rakyat, private companies and individuals also chip in to help the less fortunate."

Dr Mahathir said that while it was important for Muslims to assist their less fortunate brethren in the country and abroad, they must realise the importance of gaining knowledge, skills and wealth.

Dr Mahathir later presented bicycles donated by Yayasan Suria Malaysia to needy students, donations under the livelihood assistance scheme to Risda smallholders, packages of food items donated by Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, and donations by the Organisation of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers (Bakti) to the poor.

Also present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, Yayasan Suria adviser Dr Noraesah Mohamad, and the foundation's deputy chairman and Berita Harian Group Editor Datuk Ahmad Rejal Arbee.

Earlier, patients at the Jitra Hospital had a pleasant surprise today when Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah dropped by for a visit.

Patients at the wards received Hari Raya hampers from the couple. Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah visited the hospital after arriving in Alor Star for a half-day visit and a breaking of fast at the Al-Aqla mosque in Kubang Pasu.

At the Sultan Abdul Halim airport in Kepala Batas earlier, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, received applications to join the party from about 80 former Pas members from Lubuk Merbau.

Dr Mahathir was also handed a memorandum by Universiti Utara Malaysia student representative council president Shamshuhardi Basir.

The memorandum was signed by the council members to express support for the Prime Minister and the Government's policies.

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