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Fund off to a flying start with RM600 from PM

Ahmad Suffian; Lee Shi-Ian

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The New Straits Times' Dewan Tunku Canselor Restoration Fund got off to a flying start today when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad started the ball rolling with a personal donation of RM600.

The Prime Minister, who was at Universiti Malaya for the closing ceremony of the Symposium on Reaffirming the Idealism of Undergraduates in the New Millennium, took out several notes from his wallet and handed them to New Straits Times group editor Datuk Ahmad A. Talib.

The fund was initiated by the NST after a pre-dawn fire on Friday destroyed the 35-year-old landmark which had witnessed numerous convocation ceremonies for thousands of UM graduates.

Dr Mahathir also handed over RM5,526.47 raised by the "Group Of Concerned UM Students" led by Azham Abdul Ghani, Kalam Azat Abu Bakar, Md Dasuki Samad and Mohd Khairul Nizam Kahmis, to Ahmad.

Meanwhile, social activist Datuk Lee Lam Thye echoed NST's appeal to Malaysians to contribute generously.

Describing the move as being most appropriate and timely, he said this was a chance for past and present UM students to express their gratitude to their alma mater.

"Similarly, all Malaysians should respond generously to the appeal as the Dewan Tunku Canselor is part of our country's historical heritage," he said.

Lee presented RM100 for the fund to NST reporter Ahmad Suffian at Balai Berita today.

Meanwhile, the Parent-Teacher Association of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan TTDI Jaya collected RM500 at its inaugural meeting at the school premises in Jalan Sastera U2/1, Section U2, Shah Alam, Selangor.

The school opened its doors on Jan 2 with an initial batch of 204 students and 27 teachers.

PTA chairman Associate Professor Dr Mohd Hashim Mohd Kamil, deputy chairman Thanthawi Jauhari Ahmad, secretary Mohd Yazid Abd Rahman, treasurer Puteh Jaafar and committee member Shah De Bunt passed the hat around during the meeting today.

MCA Public Services and Complaints Bureau head Michael Chong joined in the charitable mood by presenting a RM2,000 cheque to the NST. "It is the responsibility of all Malaysians to ensure that the institution is rebuilt and we must all chip in gotong-royong style."

Businessman Jeffery Sek contributed RM5,000, saying that he was distraught when he read about the fire.

"I have been involved at the hall for the past 20 years as I am responsible for taking pictures of the graduands during their convocation.

"In a way, the hall holds many memories for me due to it being related to my work. I have taken the pictures of numerous students during their happy times when they posed with their parents," he said.

Former UM student Dr Pola Singh of Taman Tun Dr Ismail donated RM1,001 while sibilings, Divakaran, 10, and Priyanka Nair, seven, both students of Sekolah Rendah Sri Hartamas in Kuala Lumpur, handed over cheques, each amounting to RM101, to New Straits Times Sdn Bhd assistant news editor Ashraf Abdullah at Balai Berita. The money was from the children's monthly savings.

In Kota Baru, Kubang Kerian MP Husam Musa, who graduated from UM in

1983, donated RM500.

A sum of RM15,429.47 was raised today.