

07/07/2001

Give generously to DTC fund

IT was the hall of fame where graduates walked up on stage with a sense of pride and achievement to receive their scrolls from Universiti Malaya's Chancellor. It was the ceremony of a lifetime, the culmination of years of perseverance and smart learning to excel academically that invokes fond memories for the alumni.

The fun and scramble to be there early to try out the dark blue graduation robe and mortar board for size - apparel that had been passed from one graduating class to another - will be muted for the Class of 2001 for these were burnt in the pre-dawn fire that destroyed the university's Dewan Tunku Canselor a week ago.

The sense of nostalgia, frustration and anger in seeing the mangled steel and broken glass has spurred efforts to raise money to restore the building to its former glory.

The New Straits Times launched its DTC Restoration Fund soon after getting news of the fire. The initiative is in keeping with the company's commitment towards worthy causes and excellence in education which are part and parcel of its social responsibility.

The Fund took off with a personal contribution of RM600 from the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Hats have been passed around since then and this is as good an opportunity as any for individuals and companies to contribute towards a worthy and noble cause.

This venerable hall in the country's oldest university is more than a campus landmark. Since it was opened by the country's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, 35 years ago, it has symbolised the hopes and aspirations of all Malaysians.

It is a place where many have thronged to sit for their examinations, taken part in convocations, cultural activities and other functions. The Experimental Theatre which adjoins the back of the hall has been the stage for dramas and plays.

Malaysians are known for their generosity when it comes to taking up the gauntlet for charitable and meaningful causes. Students and staff should look back with gratitude at being given the opportunity to be a part of the university, partaking in its academic and extra-curricular activities.

Some have donated towards the fund and some have pledged contributions. This is a golden opportunity for companies to donate generously to help rebuild a national heritage.

We are touched by those who have come forward to give, in big and small amounts. A gift from the heart is always something to be cherished. Their sincerity and generosity is a reflection of all that is good in our society.

We are confident there are many more generous people who will chip in and do their bit. Similarly, we hope more companies will help out in this cause. It will be a nice gesture if these companies return to society a small part of their profits. This will earn them a lot of goodwill and give a big boost to their image and this is a grand opportunity to do it.

The Government has announced plans to build a bigger hall in the university for convocations and other functions previously held at the Dewan Tunku Canselor. The DTC will be rebuilt on the present site and turned into a university museum and multi-purpose hall. This will not in any way diminish its place in the university. It shall rise from the ashes

to take its rightful place in the history of tertiary education. It will be a heritage for all Malaysians.

(END)