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We all did good

By Ahirudin Attan

WHEN I MET PATRICK for the first time the other day, the German lad who's a trainee with Daimler-Chrysler in Malaysia looked so downcast that I wondered if he had lost someone in the tsunami.

As it turned out, his sombre mood did have something to do with the killer waves which have killed over 160,000 people in the region, although not in any way as dramatic as I speculated.

"I was in Penang yesterday, we were seeing if we could offer any help to the tsunami victims," he told me. Together with several Malaysian colleagues, Patrick helped clean up some areas affected by the killer waves.

He'd read about the scale of destruction caused by the tsunami in Phuket, Banda Aceh and Sri Lanka. His Malaysian colleagues had asked the management to let them go to these places to help. "They are a fantastic lot," he said of his Malaysian colleagues.

The German said it. By any standard, Malaysians have proved that they are more than just bleeding hearts who force themselves to give to anyone who could pass off as a beggar.

As soon as they understood how big the tsunami was, Malaysians gave not just their wealth and belongings but their energy and their hearts as well. We not only set up various tsunami relief funds but we sent ourselves, in various capacity, to help.

And we gave without any care of whether those victims were in Aceh or in Sri Lanka.

We were not just generous; we were creative, too. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad raised more than RM600,000 driving donors around the Sepang race track. Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, the Prime Minister's wife, raised RM1.5 million with two songs at a charity concert last week. Tun Daim Zainuddin was in Banda Aceh to study the possibility of Malaysia "adopting" thousands of children who lost their parents to the tsunami.

But some Malaysians, as usual, just could not grow their small minds.

The holier-than-thou elements, especially, were working overtime.

Some questioned the "purity" of money donated by certain quarters involved with activities rendered "nonhalal".

Some accused you of not giving and not helping, just because your name was not in the papers. Nestle, which brought us Maggi and Milo, among other things, was a victim of this better-than-thou. It sent out press statements last week in defence of itself and its employees.

"It has been brought to our attention that some parties have highlighted the lack of financial support by multinational corporation such as Nestle in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster in Malaysia and the region." "We would like to take this opportunity to clarify that despite the lack of publicity .. Nestle has contributed substantially in terms of resources, products and financial support to Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

"We did not seek publicity ... as this was not our objective. Our immediate concern was to provide assistance where needed most and in the most efficient, effective and quickest way." The statement went on to broadly list Nestle's track record where charity is concerned in Malaysia as well as in the international scene.

I am not crazy about Milo or Maggi, but I must say that even by Malaysia's high standards, Nestle has done good and given generously to

charity and good causes.

When I met someone I knew who works closely with Nestle the other day, I told her that I thought it was unnecessary for the company to react to such accusations.

But she said it would have been harder to just shut up. "It hurts when someone accuses you of not doing anything in times like these when you are doing quite a bit." I told her that perhaps, in the Malaysian context, you should never keep quiet about something good that you are doing or have done. By telling others the good we have done, we can hope to inspire others to do the same, or even better.

Of course, you can't please everyone. You tell the world every good thing you do and they might accuse you of bragging or doing it for the publicity.

(END) Source : New Straits Times