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'Good governance key to increased tithes'

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SERDANG: The introduction of the right government policies, coupled with prudent economic management, are among the factors that have contributed towards the country's steadily increasing annual tithe collection.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said a proper tithe payment system implemented by the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Council (MAIWP), such as deduction from salary and providing tax exemption, as well as raising awareness among Muslims, were also factors.

This, he said, was evident from MAIWP's increasing tithe collection; it collected RM100 million in 2000, RM532 million last year and RM585 million so far this year.

"This shows that the economy of Muslims has improved and that the government's policies are on point," he said, adding that the increased tithe collection was a reflection of the improved economy, which was acknowledged by Fitch Ratings on

Wednesday.

Fitch had announced its reviewed ratings on Malaysia's economic outlook from "negative" to "stable".

"If government policies do not bring about success and positive impact, it will be impossible for Muslims to achieve economic progress," he said at the presentation of MAIWP Aidilfitri contributions to the poor here.

Present was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department and MAIWP chairman Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom.

Najib reminded Malaysians to be grateful with the progress and development they had achieved, and to not tarnish the country's image.

He cited the example of foreigners attempting to enter Malaysia at all costs and said it only went to show that the country's economy was healthy.

"Although the national economy has improved, we are facing challenges. But we should not go to the

extent of tarnishing the country's image.

"The Rohingyas are sacrificing their lives to enter Malaysia, coming in droves in boats. When they land in this country, they prostrate themselves and kiss the ground of Malaysia, which they regard as a land of plenty."

Najib presented Aidilfitri aid of RM18.27 million by Baitulmal for the 53,880 people registered with MAIWP, including for 9,510 Muslim converts (with cash aid of RM2.49 million).

He also launched Baitulmal's Takaful Asnaf Plan for 20,000 Baitulmal aid recipients, which provides coverage of RM5,000 for accidents, RM5,000 for death caused by accidents and RM2,000 for death, per holder.

Najib also launched Baitulmal's mobile counter, aimed at facilitating assistance for the underprivileged Muslims, who are not able to go to its office and branches.