



Nation



World Updates



Courts

Additional Photos. Extra Descriptions. Increased Visibility.

 Only available @ **ClassifiedsPlus**

Parliament

Columnists

Opinion

Fight Crime

Archives

NEWS

Go elsewhere

News

Search

[Nation](#)

Thursday December 27, 2007

Giving aid with gratitude

MALAYSIAN STORIES

Last month, Mercy Malaysia became the third humanitarian group in the world to be awarded the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership certificate. Its president Datuk Dr Jemilah Mahmood says this is part of Mercy's efforts to remain independent, impartial and transparent.

IF you ask Datuk Dr Jemilah Mahmood why she started Mercy Malaysia, a humanitarian relief organisation, in 1999, she will give you a simple one-word answer: "Gratitude."

Gratitude for living in a region relatively free of natural disasters, gratitude for a good job (she is a gynaecologist) and gratitude for living in a country that is not at war.

What began as a personal response to the conflict in Kosovo has become an organisation that today has some 4,500 volunteers and staff members stationed in Malaysia and other parts of the world.

Yes, it has always been Mercy's intention to be "a platform to do good". And although Dr Jemilah is so visibly Muslim ("Everywhere I go, I stick out like a sore thumb with my headscarf," she laughs.), she insists that Mercy remains a multi-ethnic and multi-religious agency.

"Wherever we go, we go in as Malaysians – not as Muslims or Hindus or Christians. And we always fly the Malaysian flag." The flag clearly identifies Mercy missions as Malaysian missions.



Dr Jemilah: 'We always fly the Malaysian flag. It clearly identifies Mercy missions as Malaysian missions'

"People have been amazed by the fact that our teams comprise people of different races and religions," she adds. This was most apparent in Afghanistan where the locals are already suspicious of one another – to see multi-ethnicity at work close-up was a good experience for them.

She also mentions that very often volunteers returning from a mission feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude that Malaysia is so peaceful.

"International work is important; people are exposed to what it feels like to be in a country with no peace, or one that is vulnerable to natural

disasters. When they return, they just want to kiss the tarmac!"

Dr Jemilah says people who often whinge about Malaysia have no idea how lucky they are to have a safe home; to have security and peace. "Yes, those missions are reality checks for us."



Most Viewed

- [Dream career or drug courier?](#)
- [Another fatal expressway crash](#)
- [China dolls nabbed](#)
- [Educators caught stealing](#)
- [Favourite horse dies minutes before race](#)
- [Too good to miss](#)
- [Simply smashing](#)
- [May peace always be with us](#)
- [Herald gets good news](#)
- [Family attacked by youths at beach](#)

Latest Jobs from StarJobs

- [Regional Sales Technician](#)
- [Marketing Officers](#)
- [Retail Executive](#)
- [Application Engineer](#)
- [Operations Manager](#)
- [Senior Underwriter](#)
- [Chemist](#)
- [Commercial Engineer](#)
- [DTP Artist](#)
- [Purchasing Clerk](#)

[More Jobs...](#)

In the beginning, Dr Jemilah modelled Mercy after medical aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) but after three or four years realised that first response was not enough to help a community in distress.

“We wanted to do more, to leave the communities stronger than before we came,” she explains.

Enter Total Disaster Risk Management (TDRM) which is an approach that considers all the phases of a disaster: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Although people most readily identify Mercy with emergency response, they do so much more eight years on after Dr Jemilah first went to Kosovo.

“Most times, the emergency medical relief teams leave after a while but we have remained in a few countries to help the community.”

Mercy Malaysia, which was the first response team in Aceh after the tsunami in 2004, remains in Indonesia and also has projects in Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Cambodia.

At home, Mercy is committed to work with the Government on disaster preparedness in schools and other health projects.

Dr Jemilah thinks it is very important to press on with projects involving the orang asli communities “which need our help most.”

This has also been a great year for Mercy Malaysia: it became only the third NGO in the world (and first in Asia) to get a Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) certificate.

HAP is a Geneva-based organisation that audits humanitarian groups to ensure accountability to donors and beneficiaries.

The Danish Refugee Council and a Senegal-based agency, Ofadec, got their certificates earlier this year,

The upholding of standards and the insistence on being transparent has always been part of Mercy Malaysia's philosophy.

After all, it was the first NGO in Malaysia to publish its financial report in major newspapers.

It won the ACCA Mesra award from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants for social reporting and transparency.

So it is not enough to be a do-gooder. Mercy believes that adhering to standards will help them to uphold their values.

“We want to be a platform for national unity. Those of us who have been to disaster areas around the world have seen the best and worst in people; what the absence of government can do to a country. We don't want to see that happen in our own country,” says Dr Jemilah.

Ads by Google

[Great Debt Sources](#)

Debt Solutions from the Experts Get Free Solutions, Info, Sources

Bonsaistar.com/Debt

[Great Loan Sources](#)

Loan Solutions from the Experts Get Free Solutions, Info, Sources


Fine-Loan-Site.com

[Great Debt Sources](#)

Get Debt Solutions And Information From The Experts & Trusted Sources

Fine-Debt-Site.com

 Printer Friendly

 Email This

More News:

Nation Headlines



[FAQ](#) - [Privacy Statement](#) - [Terms of Use](#) - [Write to Us](#) - [Site Map](#)

Copyright © 1995-2007 [Star Publications \(Malaysia\) Bhd](#)
(Co No 10894-D)
Managed by I.Star.