

Recession fails to melt down giving spirit

CRISIS HAS NOT DETERRED THE DESIRE OF PEOPLE TO HELP THE NEEDY IN TERMS OF MONETARY DONATIONS AND RELIEF GOODS, SAYS UAERCA OFFICIAL



Photo used for illustrative purpose only

The organisation has already donated Dhs50 million cash and spent \$300,000 on buying goods within Haiti as donation.

BY MARIECAR JARA-PUYOD

THE global meltdown has no negative effect on the volunteerism of UAE residents, said a senior official of a UAE humanitarian organisation linked up with 178 non-government organisations and societies worldwide, through the International Red Crescent Movement.

In fact, the UAE Red Crescent Authority (UAERCA) director Mohammed Al Zarouni said donations have increased.

"It might surprise you, but donations have increased more during these times," he said, replying to a question by The Gulf Today at the press conference of the upcoming 7th edition of the Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development (Dihad) Conference and Exhibition between April 4 to 6.

The theme will be "Global Health Challenges of Tomorrow — Impact and Response" to be keyed by United Nations Relief and Works

Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East commissioner general Filippo Grandi and with World Food Programme regional ambassador Egyptian actress Henda Sabry in attendance.

Meanwhile, Al Zarouni told The Gulf Today at the sidelines that humanitarian projects for earthquake-devastated Haiti will remain to be the donation of cash and relief goods, and the provision of clean potable water.

The organisation has already donated Dhs50 million cash and spent \$300,000 on buying goods within Haiti as donation.

UAERCA directly sourced the goods from Haiti itself in order to prop up and keep the economy going.

Other works UAERCA aid include the distribution of 200 tonnes of food and medicine to the residents of Gaza Strip where the situation is bleaker due to the prevalence of severe diseases.

UAERCA has also taken care of the expen-

ditures for 1,000 caesarian births in Ethiopia.

"The recession might have affected the real estate among others, but not the desire of the people in the UAE to help the needy in terms of monetary donations and relief goods," he said.

The question was raised since at the "Dihad 2010," wherein 100 countries are expected to converge at the Dubai World Trade Centre, where UAERCA will introduce its Student Crescent (SC).

"They are going to provide entertainment through song and dance numbers about humanitarianism," said Al Zarouni, explaining that SC is a group of volunteer students who are interested in humanitarian and relief issues and who can play an active role in the promotion of humanitarianism in their respective schools.

He said that speaks highly well of the level of volunteerism the youth have in the UAE, especially as far as he knows

and as part of the Islamic tradition, extending support and aid to the marginalised as well as the distressed, is already included in the education curriculum.

What he said supported what Action Care project officer Cherryn Kelly told The Gulf Today during the Ramadan last year that volunteer work has gained ground in the country.

The officer of the organisation networked with charitable foundations had then said: "We have been doing community service for the past 30 years and in our experience, people in all countries, we have worked in have shown great interest in what we are doing."

"It is the youth in the UAE who have been participating," Kelly then said, citing the Scientific Club as among the first volunteers.

On his part, Al Zarouni said there are at least 1,000 student volunteers in almost all the schools in Dubai.