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Doing their bit for the community

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Don't be shy: Najib talking to a nervous Heng Ai Ling (right), a pupil from SJK (C) On Pong Ampang, Selangor, while her schoolmates look on.

ENTREPRENEURS are stepping up to contribute to the country's education needs.

Founded by a group of prominent contributors and mainly funded by Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn Bhd, The Community Chest was launched on Sept 26 last year to promote and support education through funding.

At a recent ceremony to launch its website, a third batch of funds amounting to RM38.3 mil was distributed to 196 schools in the Klang Valley.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who presented the mock cheques to the school representatives, said that with the contribution from The Community Chest along with allocations from the Government, facilities could now be provided for vernacular and mission schools.

"Every school will get a fair share from the Government and the private sector," he said, adding that this was an example of a "public private partnership".

Since its launch, The Community Chest has already approved an allocation of about RM100mil for 302 different vernacular and mission schools.

The Community Chest honorary trustee Tun Mohammed Hanif Omar added that besides its success in providing donations for over 300 schools, the organisation had also managed to keep its operating expenses low.

"We have already received donations amounting to a few hundred thousand ringgit within the past year. This, I believe, is a huge feat for any charitable organisation," he said.

Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn Bhd managing director Tan Kong Han said most of the money spent went towards the travelling costs of volunteers.

Tan explained that volunteers had to visit the various schools in order to determine the problems the schools faced and how urgent their needs were.

“Before we launched our site, we had a temporary website. We had more than 400 schools which had written in to request for aid,” he said.

He said a “paper evaluation” was carried out after the requests were made. Follow-up calls were later made to the schools for more information.

Finally volunteers visited the schools for further details and interviews, Tan added.

“There were some schools that experienced flooding every morning. For such cases, no further explanations were necessary,” he said.

Tan said that other corporations could get involved in different ways. “Those who donate are able to get a tax exemption. Companies can also get their employees to be involved as volunteers or even provide raw materials.

Tan said that the The Community Chest’s aim was to provide whatever the pupils needed. The organisation even paid the wages of two teachers in rural schools in Sarawak every month.

Tan said that he hoped other corporations or tycoons would learn from The Community Chest’s model and come up with their own variations.

“For example, tycoons can set up a trust and put money into that. They can also choose other causes to support,” he added.