

> COMMENT BY CHANDRA MUZAFFAR

HUDUD IN ITS TRUE PERSPECTIVE

It is not one's observance of hudud's modes of punishment that defines one's piety. It is one's commitment to justice that matters. >32

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Community Chest is a plus but not a substitute

IF there is any sector in Malaysia that can always do with more support, it is education. To this end, several top tycoons have come together to ensure that vernacular and mission schools nationwide receive at least RM100mil annually.

Already, The Community Chest has disbursed RM26.1mil to 61 schools at Monday's launch. The charitable foundation's promising and novel approach will benefit all Malaysians irrespective of ethnicity.

Education is a vital sector unlike all others. It is vast, pivotal and definitive, as it determines the future of Malaysians and Malaysia.

It also requires continuously substantial inputs, particularly for a developing country. In Malaysia, education consistently occupies the top tier of national priorities.

National expenditure on education is therefore more than simply budgetary expenditure. It is also a national investment, and an investment in the nation's future.

And since education serves all citizens, it should never be politicised to become a partisan issue. Wherever and whenever the sector receives a boost, that should be welcomed by all.

But educational needs are considerable and expanding, so even the

Star says

private sector's best efforts cannot fully replace Federal funding. A generous combination of private and industry donors still cannot fully satisfy these needs, particularly as the population grows.

For The Community Chest to derive substantial inputs from the gaming industry takes the industry, indeed the private sector as a whole, to a new level in corporate social responsibility. This would not

"encourage" more people to gamble any more than the social welfare projects of the Social Welfare Lottery once did.

The question is not the status of the gaming industry in the country. Rather, it is how some of the proceeds from the industry can be channelled into socially constructive ends.

Admittedly, there can be few ends more deserving than education. The gaming industry has set a positive example in corporate citizenship that other industries might yet emulate.

The Community Chest is an effort that should complement and not substitute public sector funding. To

be a value-added factor, it must not signal the start of a process of marginalising vernacular and mission schools. Education remains a prime responsibility of the Federal Government.

Government resources must therefore remain within easy reach whenever vernacular or mission schools need help, which they will from time to time.

If Federal funds need to be complemented by private sources such as The Community Chest, the heavy responsibility of education surely cannot fall on the shoulders of the private sector alone.