

Thumbs up for Community Chest



PETALING JAYA: Barisan Nasional leaders have praised Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak's announcement of setting up a Community Chest to fund vernacular and mission schools.

Last week, Najib revealed that a minimum RM100 million of gambling funds would be channelled to these schools annually through the project.

It would be funded primarily by the profits of gaming company Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn Bhd's returns from its investments and public donations.

The funds would be managed by a board of trustees, chaired by Genting Malaysia chairman Lim Kok Thay.

MIC chief: Schools can approach us

Commenting on this, MIC president G Palanivel said the project would serve to benefit both Tamil and Chinese schools.

‘Priority should be given to partially-funded schools,’ he added.

He also said that MIC's door was open to any Tamil school which wished to receive the funds.

‘They can come to us. We will approach the board members for it or the school management can meet the trustees straight,’ he told FMT.

Whether the programme was mooted due to the government's failure to address the needs of the vernacular schools, Palanivel dismissed the notion saying that the government had always given fair allocation to all schools.

‘Now the government is encouraging the private sector to contribute and it's time for the private sector to show some support,’ he said.

He added that this was not the first time private sector participation was welcomed as even former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad mooted the Caring Malaysia programme to encourage the private sector to contribute to society.

‘For some reason, it didn't work out that well then. I believe the government should not be shouldering the responsibility alone,’ he said.

Skills improvement programmes

Echoing Palanivel's sentiments, Gerakan's education and knowledge society bureau chairman Lau Chin Hoon said any effort to raise funds to support schools should be supported.

He then said the board of trustees must place emphasis on channelling the funds to schools that have unfit buildings to be refurbished.

‘There is no need to channel much funds to some schools in urban areas which already have luxurious infrastructure,’ he noted.

He also said that funds should be channelled to overcrowded schools to build more classrooms for students.

Lau added not only would this help improve the learning atmosphere but also encourage more schools to adopt the single session system.

‘The funds can also be used to fund programmes that cater for students and teachers’ skills improvement programmes,’ he said.

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