

Prioritising early education ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

KUCHING: The Sarawak government will take over the operations of all 82 SeDidik pre-schools in Sarawak, starting next year*.

Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr James Masing described the move as a step on the part of Sarawak to be more responsible towards children's early education, by providing Sarawakian children aged four to five with a good foundation.

"Sarawak takes education seriously, thus we will foot the bill for this purpose. There is a Jewish saying: Give me a child till the age of seven, and I will give you a man," he said when contacted by The Borneo Post last night.

He said this when asked to comment on the announcement by Minister of Welfare, Community Well Being, Women, Family and Childhood Development Dato Sri Fatimah Abdullah that the Sarawak government has agreed to the taking-over of all SeDidik pre-schools.

Fatimah, in a press conference earlier yesterday, announced the matter was agreed upon during the recent state Cabinet meeting following a proposal put forward by her ministry.

"The Cabinet has also approved an allocation of RM20 million for SeDidik's take over. Similarly, the government has also approved another RM20 million for its maintenance and repair," she said.

SeDidik, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) that provides early childhood education and care, as well as before-after school care.

With the planned take-over by the Sarawak government, these pre-schools will come under the watch of the Ministry of Welfare, Community Well Being, Women, Family and Childhood Development.

Fatimah also told reporters that all the 3,034 nurseries and kindergartens, as well as those privately-owned but registered with the government, will receive a grant of RM5,000 for the implementation of learning activities and for a balanced and healthy diet programme.

For this, RM16 million was approved by the state government and this is expected to benefit 3,200 early childhood education institutions in Sarawak.

She also urged nurseries and kindergarten whose parent companies are in Peninsular Malaysia, but have franchise branches in Sarawak, to register with the Sarawak government through her ministry.

Earlier, Fatimah launched Wellbest Kitchen, an initiative under Koperasi Usahawan Mikro Kebajikan Berhad that aims to provide welfare recipients with training on how to start a business, while also empowering them to be less reliant on welfare aid.

Fatimah said under the initiative, grants totalling RM500,000 were provided to assist young low-income earners and those with disabilities earning less than RM1,000 a month to venture into business.

Assistant Minister of Women, Family and Childhood Development Rosey Yunus was also present at the launching.

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