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# Educating child and parent

THE Education Ministry's urgency to provide education for orang asli children has resulted in the Comprehensive Special Model School concept, better known as K-9.

A K-9 school hosts orang asli students and provides education from pre-school up to Form Three.

The concept is the brainchild of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who sought to provide education for indigenous students in his hometown of Pekan, Pahang.

"Form Four and Five education is not provided as we want to encourage indigenous students to socialise with other students at government schools," explains deputy director general of education Azizah Abd Gani, who heads the ministry's special education department.

K-9 will solve the problem of under-enrolled orang asli schools, as all indigenous students in such schools will be drafted into a K-9 set-up, which is equipped with hostels and computers.

Presently, the only operating K-9 school is SK Bandar 2 in Paloh Hinai, Pekan, which caters mainly to indigenous students from the Jakun tribe. The school hosts 151 of them, out of a total enrolment of 322.

"The K-9 school concept solves a lot of problems, such as lodging and transport, as indigenous students stay at the hostel," says Azizah. "They are well taken care

of as the Paloh Hinai school has good facilities and medical aid is available. Also, scholarships and other incentives are provided to encourage them to study harder."

Parents can visit their children whenever they like as the school provides free accommodation for visitors. Rooms are equipped with television sets, and food is provided.

Based on feedback, the orang asli parents like the motel concept employed at Paloh Hinai and many of them have visited their children.

Azizah says the Paloh Hinai school is an overwhelming success and more K-9 schools will be built. SK Lemoi in Cameron Highlands

will be converted into one, and plans are afoot to build another in Long Bedian, Sarawak, for the Penan tribe.

"Following Unesco regulations, all students must receive the same access and equity. By focusing our efforts on orang asli students, we are living up to our vision of education for all," adds Azizah.

"We constantly conduct outreach programmes and try to recruit orang asli teachers to teach in K-9 schools as they are familiar with the students' culture."

The ministry is also making simultaneous efforts to eradicate illiteracy among indigenous parents. It plans to conduct adult classes at which participants can learn how to read, write and count. These classes will be held thrice weekly in 22 schools nationwide.

The hope is that once the parents are educated, they will stress the importance of education to their children and encourage them to go to school.

Most orang asli adults are keen to learn the alphabet, arithmetic and certain skills, Azizah notes. However, some complain that the classes interfere with

their economic activities, while others need money for the journey to school. As such, the ministry plans to pay those who turn up.

Participants will get RM15 per two-hour class, with an extra RM4 for meals. Those who drive may get another RM5 for petrol.

As there are many indigenous settlements in Malaysia, the ministry is working with the Department of Orang Asli Affairs Malaysia (JHEOA) in its outreach

programmes for children and parents. It also works closely with public institutions that help it conduct research.

"Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia have helped us greatly," says Azizah. "Thanks to their research, we are able to tailor our programmes and policies to orang asli needs."



Azizah Abd Gani ... the K-9 school concept is an overwhelming success.



A volunteer teaching Wati and her daughter Sasila how to write in Sang Lee village.