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Bukit Merah developer to modernise Kg Selamat

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TAKING young, rural children by the hand to face the onslaught of the modern world is a mammoth social task, even a delicate one.

For the villagers of Kampung Selamat in northern Perak, those first steps are being measured by nothing less than an emissary of this increasingly technology-driven society.

Emkay Holdings Group, which is undertaking the construction of the adjoining Bukit Merah Laketown project in Kerian, through its subsidiaries, has "adopted" the village in an effort to bring about social, economic and educational benefits to its residents.

Under the adoption scheme, Emkay would provide free school tuition, computer classes as well as on-the-job training for the villagers.

Students are also brought on trips to Kuala Lumpur to broaden their outlook and expose them to the challenges of modern living.

The villagers understand that the plan does not promise instant change; just opportunity.

The adoption programme is the brainchild of the group's executive chairman Datuk Mustapha Kamal Abu Bakar, also known as Datuk Emkay.

Mustapha Kamal said his group's contribution was in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed's Vision 2020 to turn Malaysia into a developed nation.

"Developing the Bukit Merah Laketown with ample business and job opportunities will see the vision come true to a certain extent," he said.

He said Emkay was concerned about eliminating poverty and helping to raise the rakyat's standard of living.

"There are three stages to the adoption programme in Kampung Selamat, the first being creating a greater awareness and confidence among the villagers," he said.

Projects carried out under this stage were gotong-royong exercises, educational visits and the extension of financial aid to the needy.

"For the short-term phase, which is slowly being implemented, job opportunities such as handicraft and nursery activities are being provided for the villagers."

For the long-term, Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Kampung Selamat's education standards and achievements as well as those of secondary students attending schools in the vicinity, are being upgraded.

"There is a seven-year programme (from 1995 to 2002), which includes tuition classes for pupils from Year Three to Form Three," Mustapha Kamal said.

SRK Kampung Selamat headmaster Mohamad Rafiai Mohamad Daham was happy with the group's contribution towards the school's physical and educational development.

He said the pupils' performance in the Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (Primary Five) was improving with Emkay's tuition classes.

"Better results were seen in overall passes in the English, Mathematics and Science papers," he said.

With 76 houses and a population of 400, Kampung Selamat is already showing signs of turning into a modern village.

In the past, most villagers farmed for a living. Now the younger generation has increasingly turned to factories for work.

One of the village's oldest residents, Jimah Ahmad, 71, said she was happy to know about the plans to develop the village.

Jimah, who spent her younger days tapping rubber, said it was kind of the Emkay group to contribute to the development of her kampung.

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