

22/11/1999

Bernas launches fund for farmers' children

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ALOR STAR, Sun. - Padiberas Nasional Bhd today launched an education fund for children of padi farmers in support of government efforts to develop the rural community.

The fund, called Dana Pendidikan Anak Pesawah Cemerlang Bernas, is Bernas' way of recognising the continuous support it has received from padi farmers.

Bernas has set aside an initial allocation of RM2.5 million and an additional RM25,000 a year for the fund which is for primary and secondary school children.

Launching the fund at the Bernas Anak Bukit complex, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamadsaid Bernas had never failed to carry out its responsibility of looking at the well-being of padi farmers in the country.

"Besides offering a high padi price to the farmers, Bernas is also concerned about the education of the farmer's children," he said before some 4,000 people from the padi industry, including farmers and their families.

Dr Mahathir also presented contributions from the fund to 21 outstanding students from all over the country. They are among 270 school children to benefit from the fund next year.

Those in Standards four to six will receive RM450 per year. Students in Forms one to three will get RM600 while those in Forms four and five will receive RM700.

The aid will be stopped if the recipients pursue their studies in fully residential government schools. However, they will receive a token as appreciation for their excellent academic performance.

Bernas will also provide support programmes such as organising education workshops, revision classes for those taking examinations and thanksgiving ceremonies in appreciation of the students' achievements.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir criticised Pas for its lack of vision in defining the scope of development.

He cited the example of the Muda Agricultural Development Authority's Muda Irrigation Scheme in Kedah which enabled padi crops to be planted during the drought, twice annually.

Dr Mahathir said the project was attacked by Pas, which said that padi must not be planted twice in a year because it would not give the earth ample time to 'rest' in between planting.

He said the project's resounding success proved the absurdity of Pas' narrow-mindedness.

Bernas managing director Mohd Ibrahim Nor said the fund was a way to show appreciation to farmers who opted to sell their padi at Bernas complexes.

"Our contribution is small. However, the company hopes its contribution will ease farmers' financial burden."

There are about 150,000 registered farmers in the country.

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