

09 AUG 1999

School

SMK METHODIST FORMER STUDENTS CONTRIBUTE RM1 MILLION FOR SCHOOL BLOCK

By: Mohd Nasir Yusoff

BANTING, Aug 9 (Bernama) -- The sense of belonging and love for their alma mater has led former students of Sekolah Menengah Methodist here to pool their resources to build an extra block for the school.

After years of patiently collecting contributions from the public, from as low as 50 sen to the high of RM50,000, Kuala Langat's first secondary and English medium school is ready to unveil its "majestic" new four-storey block on Saturday.

The new block, comprising 12 classrooms, two laboratories, surau, teachers' room and hall will be opened by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, an event expected to be attended by thousands of the school's former students.

According to SMK Methodist principal Alice George, the efforts to roll in the funds to build the school block started 11 years ago.

"It was done bit by bit with the help of parents, former students and members of the public and not to mention the school's old boys who have become successful in their career," she said at the news conference on the opening of the school block today.

Alice said the special thing about the whole episode was that SMK Methodist was a non government assisted school.

Furthermore the school management had managed to bag some RM500,000 from various activities held during the 11-year-period, said Alice.

Alice said the rest was topped up by a school old boy who is now a successful real estate entrepreneur.

"I do not know how he did it but he is the one who topped up the costs and handled the construction, right from the piling work last May until it is ready to be opened on Saturday," she said.

Alice deemed the whole episode as "magical" describing the whole hearted efforts not only by the generous old boy but thousands of others who join hands in organising charity drives like jogathons and treasure hunts.

Alice declined to name the corporate figure but said the school hall which can accommodate 500 people would be named "Dewan Mustapha Kamal" after Emkay Group executive chairman Tan Sri Mustapha Kamal Abu Bakar.

"Tan Sri asked for his name not to be highlighted as he want it to be seen as the efforts of the community and former students apart from the love and faith in their alma mater which turned hope into reality," she said.

SMK Methodist, built in the year of independence was a wooden structure with six classrooms. Now it has three concrete blocks with 42 classrooms, accommodating 1,800 students.

One of the two-storey blocks was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is the then Education Minister in 1976.

Mustapha, a former student of the Methodist primary school, located next to the SMK Methodist studied at SMK Methodist right from form one until form five as his father was the district agriculture officer and had resided in the government quarters there.

Former SMK Methodist principal, I. Selladurai, 56, who is also a school old boy is the person who mooted the idea of building the school block in 1986 and went ahead to carve out his dream after being given the backing by Mustapha.

"The construction became the project of the local community as almost

90 per cent of Kuala Langat residents are former students of the school...hence they were not reluctant to chip in with donations," he said.

Among SMK Methodist's old boys are Finance Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Datuk Dr Shafie Mohd Salleh, Teluk Datok assemblyman Ei Kim Hock and national shooter Abdul Mutalib Abdul Razak.

-- BERNAMA

mny zul