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Puteri Umno aims to give poor children head start in education

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PETALING JAYA, Fri. - Children are getting a head start in education in pink freight containers in Taman Medan.

A new programme initiated by Puteri Umno, the pilot project is aimed at providing more educational resources for children from low-income families.

The huge containers painted vivid pink but with doors, windows, furniture and books have become classrooms fit for this community project.

In an act of creative recycling, Puteri Umno set up the community centre consisting of a container as a classroom and one as library yesterday.

Since the two containers were unloaded in the midst of this multi-racial community this week, they have become a curious spectacle for the children and adults.

The children are expected to be taught English and Jawi at tuition classes when the programme is launched on Jan 21 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The New Straits Times will provide "Newspaper in Education" classes once a week for three months to pupils from Standard One to Standard Three.

"We want to provide educational opportunities for children, aged seven to 15, of all races from low-cost housing areas. We will target other areas after we gauge the response from the pilot project," Puteri Umno Press secretary Shalina Azhar said.

Puteri Umno has acquired several freight containers in view of their abundance due to the economic slowdown and there are plans to establish 165 such centres nationwide.

The refurbished containers, sponsored by Halim Mazmin Berhad executive chairman Tan Sri Halim Mohamad, will host its first class in air-conditioned comfort next Wednesday for 15 pupils.

Shalina said the centre needed computer teachers with a recent donation of six computers.

"We need more volunteers as we hope to add other classes in the future. We also hope people can donate educational software, library books and most importantly, we need more people to sponsor the refurbishing of more containers," she said.

Sprucing up the two containers costs RM18,000, which Halim agreed to pay for, she said.

Pupils will be charged a token fee of RM1. The centre's maintainance and management is the responsibility of Taman Medan State Assemblyman Datin Norkhaila Jamaludin.

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