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Association seeks RM5m to teach Punjabi language

IPOH, Sun. - The Punjabi Education Trust Malaysia is seeking RM5 million from the Federal Government to teach the language to Punjabi students nationwide.

Chairman Santokh Singh said the community currently depended on funds raised by temples and individuals to teach the subject.

"The allocation, if granted, will be used to improve and expand Punjabi language centres nationwide and train teachers who will then teach students in national schools," he told reporters after attending a food and fun fair organised by the Perak chapter at the Youth and Sports Complex here today.

Santokh said PETM would submit a proposal to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on ways to help students in national and national type schools sitting the language in the PMR and SPM examinations.

He said the Government offered Punjabi language examination papers but had no Government-trained teachers to teach the language in schools.

"Over the years, there have been fewer students sitting the Punjabi paper as there is no one to teach them the language, a problem compounded by the thin spread of the community nationwide," he said.

He added that there were hardly 10 Punjabi students in any school to enable them to have POL (pupil's own language) classes.

A group of Sikhs established the first organised Punjabi education centre in the country here in January last year with initial funding from the Khalsa Diwan Malaysia, the parent body of the PETM.

In 1998, they travelled to Singapore to learn the Punjabi education system, coming back with a structured syllabus which incorporated the PMR and SPM Punjabi language papers.

PETM currently manages 18 centres with more than 3,000 students nationwide.

Santokh said the Education Ministry had in June granted PETM the use of public schools to hold Punjabi classes between 2pm and 6pm on Saturdays.