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Association of former students takes 11 siblings under its wing

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The plight of two sisters in Pekan, Pahang, who had to fish for living to support nine other siblings has received the attention of Ansara, the association of former Mara Junior Science College students.

The family will be among the many beneficiaries of Ansara's RM1.13 million fund collected during its national telethon for education held between Feb 1 and March 15.

"Although the fund is meant for education, we will help the family with basic needs before helping them with their education," Ansara president Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said in an interview at Balai Berita today.

He said some Ansara members were sent to the siblings' home today to get more details on the family. They took with them food such as rice, sugar and flour.

The family's plight was highlighted in Berita Harian earlier this month.

It was reported the two sisters, aged 21 and 19, had to support their siblings, aged between 15 months and 18 years, none of whom were schooling, since their mother died and their father abandoned them.

Mukhriz said aid for the children's education would be taken from the 20 per cent portion of the fund which Ansara had allocated for emergency financial assistance.

"We have also contacted nearby schools to check if the children can continue their studies," he said.

The emergency financial assistance is one of six distribution channels that Ansara has devised to channel its funds.

The other distribution channels are its Mutiara Pertiwi tuition centres (20 per cent), welfare programme (15 per cent), tertiary financial aid (10 per cent), career guidance and motivational talks (five per cent) and referral services.

Mukhriz said Ansara would open five new tuition centres to add to the existing six in the urban poor areas in the Klang Valley.

"We have plans to set up centres outside the Klang Valley such as in Kelantan and Kedah but there are a lot of considerations, such as sufficient volunteer tutors," he said.

The centres give free tuition for needy students and impose a nominal fee on others.

Since their establishment two years ago, the centres have sponsored more than 200 needy students, with 200 more waiting to enrol.

Mukhriz said Ansara received many applications for educational financial aid but they would need to be verified before money could be dispensed.

"Whatever it is, we are required to dispense at least 70 per cent of the money within the next 12 months," he said.

"The fund that we have will sooner or later be used up, which is why we have to prepare for the second national telethon by the third quarter of this year."

Mukhriz added that the association would report on the fund's development to the public from time to time.

Enquiries on the fund can be made to TabungHIP@yahoo.com or telephone 03-64118006.