

**Najib Should Not Claim Credit For 'Community Chest' Education Fund While He Continues To Marginalise Vernacular, Mission Schools**  
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Prime Minister Najib Razak should not have boasted that he would channel at least RM100 million a year to vernacular and mission schools yesterday when launching the "Community Chest" fund run by a consortium of tycoons.

He has no right to boast because the funds are from the private sector and he should not mislead the public into thinking that the allocation was provided by the Government or Barisan Nasional. (Source: RM100m in annual gambling profits for education, says Najib -Malaysian Insider)

I also regret that Najib announced that the funds will be disbursed based on how closely the schools are associated to Barisan Nasional.

In his own words, Najib said, "The funds will be distributed in close consultation with the government... parties like MCA, Gerakan and MIC as well as NGOs... to ensure that it will be distributed fairly."

The message he is sending appears to be, "If you support MCA, Gerakan, MIC and BN-affiliated NGOs, I will reward your school with education funds" which is much the same message as his infamous "You help me, I help you," speech made during the Sibü by-election.

Furthermore, if this "Community Chest" is indeed private funding and free from any form of political patronage, the disbursement of its funds should be freely determined by its trustees, and not dictated by Najib or Barisan Nasional.

The public are well aware that the Government has been marginalizing vernacular and mission schools for so many years by denying them state funds, forcing them to constantly raise funds on their own, while generously providing state funds to national-type schools.

To illustrate, Government statistics show that the Government provided national-type school students with RM1,106 each, whereas Chinese national-type primary school students received only RM146 each for the period 1991 – 2005.

The children who attend vernacular and mission schools are Malaysians too and their parents not taxpayers too. Thus, the disparity in treatment against students who attend vernacular schools is grossly unjustifiable.

I urge Najib to live up to his promise of "Rakyat Didahulukan" by putting a stop the Government's policy of unfair treatment to vernacular and mission schools.

I also urge the private funders who have contributed to the "Community Chest" to maintain autonomy over the funds and not align themselves to Barisan Nasional or any political party when disbursing the funds. Education is a public good which should transcend partisan politics. Malaysian children deserve better than that.

**TERESA KOK**