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Not every Chinese is rich

Delegates: Many folks are struggling

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KUALA LUMPUR: Ledang MCA division delegate Lee Kio Boon clapped earnestly when party president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Jung - in a heartfelt off-the-cuff moment during the opening speech - mentioned to the Prime Minister that it was not true to assume that the Chinese were a rich lot.

"People keep on assuming the Chinese are financially well off compared to other races.

"I also wish it was true, I really want to be rich. But, there are many folks out there struggling to make a decent living," said Tee, 31.

The father of four earns about RM1,200 as a general clerk for the Ledang division. His wife brings home another RM1,000.

A big chunk of RM650 goes to his parents to take care of his four children, aged between four and one.

Life insurance premium and car loan repayments take up another RM300 each.

"Luckily, we stay with my parents. We have no money to buy a house," said Tee.

He supplements his monthly income by working part-time as a trumpet player in funeral bands and is paid RM80 per session.

Tee says there is no cash left for emergency funds or even for the children's higher education.

"I hope providence will be kind by giving me a financial break. I am only a secondary three graduate from a Chinese independent school.

"I will make sure my children stay in school until they enter university. I believe higher education is the way to a better life," said Tee.

Chew Lee Goh, the delegate from Serdang



division, said Ong's situation was quite common.

"I am from the Women and Children Aid Unit of Selangor Wanita MCA. We provide counselling and legal aid to poor folks but everyday, we will get many single mothers, old people, struggling families pleading for us to give them financial help.

"Poverty is real for many people, Chinese, Malay, Indian or Eurasian. It is not true to say one race is richer than another," said Chew.

She agreed with Ong that poverty eradication measures should target the poor regardless of race.

Chew added that many young parents also did not dare have more than two children because they worry about the financial burden of raising the kids.

Lumut division delegate Yew Hin Hiong, 80, said Ong empathised with the poor because he was born into poverty.

"The family was from a new village in Perak. Many new villagers are struggling to survive.

"I have four grown-up children. I do not force them to give me monthly allowances because I know money is so 'small' nowadays.

"Instead, I tell my children to save for my grandchildren's education. But my children are lovely, they still give me pocket money when they visit," said Yew.