

Obama Visits Facility For Underprivileged Children In KL

Bernama

Nov 21, 2015

By S. Chandravathani

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- The children in a classroom at the Dignity for Children Foundation may not have realised that one of the planet's most powerful men had dropped by today.

"Hello everyone. How are you doing today?" United States President Barack Obama greeted the children aged between seven and nine as he entered the room at 11.10 am.

Ditching protocol, the father of two stooped to talk to the children at the facility, a charity-based educational institution for refugee and urban poor children in Sentul here.

He interacted with the children, some of them from Myanmar, who were busy working on their art and science projects, asking them about their favourite subjects and ambitions as he offered words of encouragement.

Obama flew into Malaysia yesterday to attend the 3rd ASEAN-US Summit as well as the 10th East Asia Summit in conjunction with the 27th ASEAN Summit which was opened today by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Dignity for Children Foundation was set up more than 15 years ago by Rev Elisha Satvinder and his wife Petrina after they found many underprivileged families living in the Sentul area.

The foundation aims to empower children from such families to break the cycle of poverty through quality education, positively transforming their lives and the lives of the community around them.

Today, the Dignity for Children Foundation is a learning centre for over 1,000 vulnerable children aged two to 17, and provides quality education and care in a secure environment.

Approached by reporters, Elisha said he was humbled by Obama's visit and shared that the president had praised him for the effort taken to educate and empower underprivileged children.

"The president said he was proud of what we're doing here. He also asked about the challenges we face. It was a very positive, encouraging conversation," he said of Obama's visit of over an hour.

Asked what moved him to set up the foundation, Elisha said it was like a God's calling for him to care for disadvantaged children.

Besides educating refugee and urban poor children, Elisha said, a stylish urban cafe called Project B, a collaboration with other partners, had been set up to help underprivileged children over 12 years of age.

He said the cafe, fully run by older students of the foundation, was meant to equip them with work experience and skills to enable them to eventually break the cycle of poverty.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2015 BERNAMA

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/newsindex.php?id=1192077>