

## **150,000 laptops promised by govt still nowhere to be seen**

**TheVibes**

**March 02, 2021**

KUALA LUMPUR – The government has yet to reveal the number of laptops that have been distributed under its Cerdik scheme.

A total of 150,000 devices were supposed to have been distributed last month.

Yesterday, The Vibes made several attempts to contact Yayasan Hasanah – the foundation handling the initiative – in order to find out the status of the roll-out, but there was no response.

The foundation is the corporate social responsibility arm of government sovereign fund Khazanah Nasional Bhd.

In November last year, Finance Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz announced that the distribution of the laptops will begin in February under the foundation's Cerdik initiative.

When contacted, PKR communications chief Fahmi Fadzil asked both the finance and education ministers to explain what happened to the Cerdik scheme, which was mentioned during the tabling of Budget 2021 in November last year.

Fahmi called on the minister to explain the reason the programme is merely a “loan” rather than an outright donation to students from the B40 group.

“They should explain what is really the status of this programme, including how much has been raised and from which GLCs (government-linked companies), how many laptops have been sent, how many schools have received and delivered to students, as well as whether these laptops can just be given permanently to the students,” the Lembah Pantai MP told The Vibes.

During the Budget announcement on November 6 last year, Tengku Zafrul announced a RM150 million fund to purchase 150,000 laptops for students in 500 schools nationwide.

The money was pooled together by GLCs and related investment firms that contributed to the Cerdik Fund.

In late January, Tengku Zafrul said that the distribution of laptops will take place in February to ensure eligible students, or households with a monthly income of below RM4,850, would receive them.

The initiative, among other reasons, was to provide underprivileged students with the necessary devices for online classes.

Opposition leaders have lambasted the timing of the roll-out, as schools had already begun online classes, educational TV programmes and other teaching methods when the new term resumed on January 20.

As most parts of the country were still under the movement control order, classes were largely conducted online.

Former youth and sports minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman in December launched a similar scheme but on a smaller scale, raising some RM383,000 and distributing at least 200 laptops to his constituents in Muar, Johor, in January.

Like Fahmi, Syed Saddiq also criticised the government for the loan scheme, which was reported to impose a RM300 fine on students for any loss or damage of their devices.

“This issue is a prime example of why Parliament needs to reconvene so that such questions can be raised and not avoided by the government – which is what is happening right now,” said Fahmi.

In mid-February, Fahmi slammed Tengku Zafrul for not mentioning that the laptops were on a “loan” basis.

Former deputy education minister Teo Nie Ching also questioned the status of the laptops promised by Tengku Zafrul, saying that the country had yet to see the “slightest hint” of the devices.

In a statement, Teo said the education minister had instead made an announcement that schools would reopen on March 1.

She added that the announcement was made on February 19 when the country recorded 2,936 new confirmed Covid-19 cases, while the total number of active cases in Malaysia was 36,797.

She said this to highlight the contrast with when schools were closed on November 9 last year, with the country recording 852 new confirmed cases and a cumulative tally of 11,689.

“Obviously, the current Covid-19 situation is at least three times worse than the situation in November.

“Yet, the Education Ministry has made the decision to reopen the schools.

“Is the ministry prepared to admit that their decision to close schools nationwide on November 8 was ill-conceived and precarious?” asked the Kulai MP. – The Vibes, March 2, 2021

**© 2021 Copyright. All rights reserved. The Vibes Dotcom Sdn Bhd (1378707-W)**

Source: <https://www.thevibes.com/articles/education/19239/150000-laptops-promised-by-govt-still-nowhere-to-be-seen>