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M'sian finalists for GP Award

Sabah State Education Dept, SK Ulu Lubai, and SK Ba Kelalan among nine finalists for prize in conjunction with 17th CCEM.

LESTER KONG

THREE projects in Malaysia have been picked to vie for this year's Good Practice Award in conjunction with the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM).

To be announced on June 16, the Good Practice Award have shortlisted nine finalists from a total of 49 submissions from 14 countries.

From Malaysia, the finalists are the Sabah State Education Department, SK Ulu Lubai and SK Ba Kelalan in Sarawak.

The Sabah State Education Department's Accelerating/Enhancing Teaching and Learning Process through Buddy Stops project had been picked for its initiative to improve education quality by putting games and activities around the school compound so that pupils can learn while playing.

"Under this project, teachers may also use the 'Stops' for regular lessons and this Good Practice helps to improve interpersonal skills, racial integration and promotes cultural activities such as storytelling," said Education Ministry director-general Tan Sri Haji Alimuddin Mohd Dom.

For delivering education under difficult circumstances, he said rural SK Ulu Lubai has been chosen for the award with a programme that successfully involved the community in improving school performance.

He said the community there have been instrumental in building the school and launched a Parent-Teacher's Association, thus leading to a higher level of student achievement and a sense of community ownership.

Likewise, Alimuddin said since 2000, SK Ba Kelalan in the hinterlands of Sarawak had also achieved excellent community participation that resulted in quality education for its students, despite difficult circumstances.

"The school carried out its Good Practice by mobilising the community to contribute voluntary service and making the school a safer and more orderly place for children to study.

"This led to a 43% improvement in student examination passes," said Alimuddin.

He said to be considered for the Education Good Practice Award, submissions (programmes, projects, policies, strategies or significant interventions) must demonstrate that they have made a positive dif-

ference to the status and condition of primary school children, their teachers, or the education system of a country.

"These must be in respect of one or more of the six action areas for Commonwealth education as identified by ministers at the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (15th CCEM) in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2003.

"These were universal primary education, eliminating gender disparities in education, improving the quality of education, using distance learning to overcome barriers, supporting education in difficult circumstances and mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS," he said.

He said the final round of selections for the awards was held on June 10 at Institut Aminuddin Baki, Malaysia's main educational management institute located in Genting Highlands, Pahang.

Meantime, Alimuddin said the country has much to share with its

fellow Commonwealth members especially in using information and communication technology to teachers' preparation, training and remuneration.

"We hope that we could showcase our progress in education thus far and discuss common issues, as this is an international event.

"We need to know the developments and policy changes in the education systems of other Commonwealth countries. Likewise, outside of the region would also want to know about education developments in Asean and other Asian countries" he said.

As part of the 17th CCEM, he said the Education Ministry has also arranged visits to two secondary schools and to Universiti Malaya in order to showcase Malaysia's educa-

tion system at work.

For example, Alimuddin said they have had long experience in this field such as starting smart schools in 1995 and some of the other countries have expressed interest in learning from local experiences, problems and successes in this field.

He added that Malaysia had innovative allowance schemes for teachers who are transferred to serve in rural areas.

"We have three types of allowances for different zones. It's a special allowance to them. Now, there is not much problems with teachers refusing to be transferred to rural areas, especially some places without steady water and electricity supply.

"I think only Malaysia has this type of special allowance scheme for teachers to be based in rural schools," he said.

On Malaysia's commitment to education development and excellence, he said Malaysia has one of the highest budget allocation to education.

"More than 25% of our national budget goes to education. Obviously the conference would want to know about our infrastructure. We have been able to build 10,000 schools nationwide and we have more than 350,000 teachers.

"We also allow parents to select the type of schools to send their children to.

"We have six types of primary schools, national, Chinese, Tamil, religious, private and international schools. All these types lend strength to our education system," said Alimuddin.

»We hope to showcase our progress and discuss common issues«

TAN SRI HAJI ALIMUDDIN MOHD DOM

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Mobilising the community: Alimuddin pointing at a banner promoting the 17th CCEM where three projects have been shortlisted for the Good Practice Award.