

NEWS CLIPPING

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Bringing smiles

> GAB initiative enables disadvantaged Tamil school students with English language proficiency

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SMILES is a programme dedicated to equipping disadvantaged Tamil school students with English language skills.

Sponsored by Guinness Anchor Bhd (GAB), the programme was established after the company found that one of the main reasons Tamil school students dropped out of school was their difficulty in coping with the English language.

"SMILES started off with the sponsorship of 280 Primary Six Tamil school students in an intensive 21-day English proficiency camp," GAB foundation director Renuka Indrarajah said in a statement.

"Later, we expanded the programme to include students from the lower primary level, and last year we engaged a child development specialist and a

lecturer in early childhood development to develop the modules used to teach the students," she said.

Two hundred Primary Two students from five Tamil schools - SJK (T) Batu Caves, SJK (T) Bangi, SJK (T) Taman Permata, Dengkil, SJK (T) Tan Sri Dato' Manikavasagam, Tanjung Malim and SJK (T) Ladang Semenyih - were sponsored for the programme, implemented in partnership with Tamil non-governmental organisation, the Education, Welfare and Research Foundation (EWRF).

"For this programme, classes are conducted every Saturday for three hours, and lessons are conducted through fun and games so that students can absorb the lesson easily and in a fun way. Facilitators (mainly volunteers) are identified and trained to use the modules developed," Indrarajah said.

Evaluation tests are conducted every month to monitor students' progress.

"This year, we are sponsoring the same batch of students as they move on to Primary Three. We also intend to see them through Primary Six," Indrarajah added.

The EWRF has set up reading corners in 36 centres and schools across the country that have custom-built furniture and bookshelves with reading materials.

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