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Tampines to plug gap: Nurseries to be built for young families

Also more to be done for elderly as estate ages, says Mah

By Lee Hui Chieh

FAMILIES with young children in Tampines GRC have been promised that nurseries will be built in their constituency.

It is one gap that National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan and his GRC MPs will plug, in an election strategy to better meet residents' needs.

'Before, we were just doing kindergartens,' he said yesterday, noting the unmet need of this big group of young families in his 'middle-aged town'.

He gave it as an illustration of the election strategy his five-MP team is adopting. In short, to add to what has been done.

'And where we have done well, we will remind people, 'Hey, I've done this for you'. That's our philosophy,' he said as he visited homes in the Tampines East ward to raise awareness about the cash gifts they will receive in May under the Progress Package.

He felt his team had done well in the last few years in meeting the needs of the elderly and children. He cited the three-in-one day-care centres where the elderly and children can interact as well as the fitness parks that provide exercise equipment for the old.

But more should, and could be done, for the elderly as Tampines, which is about 20 years old, continues to age, he said.

'We think there's a lot more that we can do, and we will ask for their support and for their votes. Because if we don't get elected, we can't do all these things.'

Yesterday, the MPs covered about 480 homes in six blocks in Tampines East Zone 2, which has relatively more needy families than other precincts in Tampines East. With Mr Mah was Mr Yatiman Yusof, Mr Ong Kian Min and Mr Sin Boon Ann. Ms Irene Ng is on an official trip overseas.

Customer service representative Andreal Lee, 29, was pleasantly surprised by Mr Mah's visit to her home in Block 218. She said: 'It's very sincere of the minister to come personally to let us know about it.'

Also, out and about last night was Jalan Besar GRC MP Lily Neo and her 120 grassroots leaders.

In separate groups, they combed the 22 blocks of rental flats in her Kreta Ayer-Kim Seng ward, spending around three hours knocking on doors and explaining to residents how to get their Workfare Bonus and other cash handouts.

One of their aims is to urge odd-job workers to sign up for the Workfare Bonus. Some are afraid that declaring their income will result in them losing their jobs, Dr Neo said.

In the recent Budget debate, MPs had said that some feared the income declaration form they have to sign to get the bonus will reveal that their employers have not been contributing to their Central Provident Fund savings, a disclosure that will get their bosses into trouble.

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