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Ex-engineer stays busy with charity work

By CHAN LI LEEN

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IPOH: **Retired chartered engineer Koon Yew Yin** has spent a large part of his life making others happy by giving out scholarships.

“Happiness to me is giving to others. I don’t expect the recipients to thank me after they graduate.



Big-hearted: Koon, an ex-engineer who loves making other people happy by offering scholarships, at his home in Ipoh.

“All I want is a simple promise that they will help others so that my work will continue even after I have died,” said the 77-year-old philanthropist who offers scholarships on www.cpiasia.net.

Since his retirement in 1983, Koon has kept busy with charity work.

He has paid for the construction of a new extension for the Salvation Army Home for orphans on Jalan Permaisuri Bainun here and gives an annual grant of RM1mil to deserving students of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar).

Koon has also offered RM30mil to the university to build a hostel at its campus in Kampar. Needy students would only have to pay a minimal amount in rental.

”You can keep making money but there is no meaning to life if you don’t know how to spend it because you can’t take any of it with you when you die.

”You must use it effectively to help others and create more happiness. It’s more satisfying,” said Koon, who believes that education can help an entire family come out from poverty.

Koon, the third of 12 children of a coffin shop owner, grew up in Kuala Lumpur during the Japanese Occupation. “I know how poor people feel,” said Koon, who obtained a government scholarship and became a chartered civil engineer. He set up Ipoh Garden Bhd with college mate Yap Lin Sen in 1962.

He is one of the founders of IJM Corporation Bhd, Gamuda Bhd and Mudajaya Group Bhd, three leading public-listed construction companies.

“Two months ago, I was invited to give a talk at a service club,” he said. “I challenged each member to give up a month’s salary to charity, and pledged to match their donations.”

Sadly, none of the members, who were businessmen and professionals, took up Koon’s challenge.

“I was shocked. I couldn’t believe it. Nevertheless, I just laughed. They have not tried giving to others because if they have and felt the happiness, they would do it over and over again,” he said.

Koon will be giving a talk on “The Conquest of Happiness” at the Syuen Hotel here on Friday at 7.30pm.

He will share his life experiences during the event organised by the Perak Academy.

For details, e-mail: contact@perakacademy or call 05-547 8949 or 016-551 8172.