

EVENTS that have been lined up in aid of The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund (STPMF) will go on as planned, with donors throwing their support behind the charity.

Travel company IPC Group plans to present a \$2,000 cheque for STPMF at an event at East Coast Park this afternoon.

Several corporate partners contacted yesterday also pledged their continued support for the fund, which celebrates its 10th anniversary on Oct 1.

They include Citi Singapore, OCBC Bank, CapitaLand and Goodwood Park Hotel, which is throwing a charity dinner concert on Oct 8 in conjunction with its 110th anniversary. The hotel aims to raise \$500,000 for the fund.

Citi declared it would continue to donate 10 cents from every drink bought from its office dispensers in Singapore, something it has been doing since 2002.

Donors say that despite the sacking of the fund's organising chairman Peter Khoo, they are committed to the STPMF's cause, which is helping underprivileged children through school.

Donors reiterate support for ST Pocket Money Fund

This cause has not changed despite Khoo's dismissal earlier this week on suspicion of pocketing illegal payments as well as shopping vouchers intended for the branding and promotional activities of The Straits Times.

Khoo, who was a senior vice-president of the English and Malay Newspapers Division at Singapore Press Holdings, has been credited with growing the fund, which has raised about \$30 million since it was started in 2000.

Mr Daniel Quek, vice-president at Cerobos Pacific, one of the initiative's first supporters, said: "Even though we are dismayed by this latest development, we will still continue our strong support of the STPMF's efforts, and also encourage

our staff to continue doing their part to help these children have a meal during recess."

Ms Selina Simson, director of IPC Group, said the company received calls from clients and well-wishers asking if it would pull out of the cheque presentation today, "but our answer has been an emphatic 'No'".

She said: "The reason is that we trust and are confident that the irresponsibility of one man cannot undo and malign the splendid work... (of the fund)."

Individual donors are supportive too. Mr Ravi Philemon, executive director of the Sun-Dac Centre for the Disabled, said he has decided to continue contributing to the fund after thinking through the news yesterday morning.

He said: "I think there are enough mechanisms to make sure the fund is not abused... I hope (people) will not take this as an excuse not to donate."

However, Mr Philemon suggested that there should be more transparency as to how the donations are received and managed.

He said: "That will be very helpful in boosting the confidence of donors."

Straits Times associate editor Bertha Henson, who has taken over as head of the Editorial Projects Unit (EPU) from Khoo, said that changes will be implemented immediately. The EPU organises fund-raising activities and collects donations for the STPMF.

Donations received are forwarded to

the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), which disburses the funds through voluntary welfare organisations. Official receipts are issued.

Cash donations are usually counted by the EPU, and the amount is acknowledged and counter-signed. The staff then deliver the money to NCSS.

Ms Henson now intends to put all donations into money bags, which will be tied, tagged and delivered to NCSS. The money will be counted by an external party - meaning no counting of money takes place at SPH.

Ms Henson also reiterated that the money in the fund has not been affected, as far as she and the company know.

She emphasised that only a small portion of donations is collected in cash. The current practice is that donors are asked to convert their cash donations into a cheque.

But she added that the fund would not turn away those who donate small cash amounts.

TEH JOO LIN, MELISSA SIM
Heartened by ST's commitment, Forum Page A42

\$10,000 pledge for ST pocket money fund

Life for children from financially strapped families can be difficult.

Well aware of this, a company specialising in educational tours for schools, International Paradise Connexions (IPC), decided to contribute to The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

"A lot of students need financial assistance and we want to spread that awareness to our corporate clients," said Ms Selina Simson, one of the directors of IPC.

The 15-year-old company has pledged \$10,000 to the fund.

It donated \$2,000 at IPC's "We Are Family" event at East Coast Park yesterday.

The donation of the remaining \$8,000 will be staggered and will be fully paid out by July next year.

IPC director Raj Kumar presented the cheque to Straits Times associate editor Bertha Henson, head of the paper's Editorial Projects Unit.

The unit was formerly headed



Ms Henson receiving a cheque from IPC's Mr Kumar yesterday, with actor Edmund Chen on stage.

He was arrested last Friday on suspicion of criminal breach of trust and is out on bail.

Yesterday's event marked the first donation the fund has received publicly since news broke about Khoo.

Asked to comment on the case, Mr Kumar said: "We have confidence in ST's credibility and are assured that the fund is secure."

In a speech, Ms Henson said she hoped the fund's \$5 million target for more than 12,000 beneficiaries this year would be met, and expressed appreciation for IPC's support.

Melissa Pang



新上任的学校零用钱基金筹委会主席默乐(中)昨天在活动上从IPC董事经理拉吉古玛(右)手中接过支票。艺人陈志财(左)也为自己编写的儿童故事书“Dino Rulez!”签名。(海峡时报)

海峡时报“学校零用钱基金”换主席后接获首笔捐款

◎赖诗琳

新加坡报业控股一名前高层涉嫌私吞19万元礼券与款项的事件曝光后,本地一家公司昨天捐献2000元,对《海峡时报》学校零用钱基金表示全力支持。

International Paradise Connexions (IPC) 相信是事件发生后首家在公开场合,捐款支持《海峡时报》学校零用钱基金的公司。

IPC的董事经理拉吉古玛(Raj Kumar)昨天在东海岸举行的“We are Family”活动上,将一张志银2000元的支票交给《海峡时报》副总编辑默乐(Bertha Henson)。

邱聪明事件后没人撤销捐款

私吞礼券与款项事件日前曝光后,报业控股英文与马来文报集团品牌及促销部前高级副总裁邱聪明已被公司开除,原本由他担任的学校零用钱基金筹委会主席一职由《海峡时报》副总编辑默乐(Bertha Henson)接任。

默乐昨天在活动上先介绍自己是学校零用钱基金筹委会新任的主席。她接过支票后向在场公众表示会确保基金不受影响。她指私吞款项是起很不幸的

对学校零用钱基金非常重要。”她也表示并没有捐款者在事件发生后撤销捐款。

IPC承诺捐1万元

IPC专门替学校主办海内外的教育郊游活动,公司上下共有约25人。

默乐以IPC为例说:“小公司也有能力做善事,IPC就是很好的例子。”

这次是IPC第一次捐款给学校零用钱基金。公司已承诺捐出1万元给学校零用钱基金,昨天捐出的2000元是这1万元的一部分;公司已计划在接下来的活动中陆续捐出剩余的8000元。

董事西姆森(Selina Simson)说,私吞礼券事件并不影响她对《海峡时报》和学校零用钱基金的信心。

她说,虽然有人做错了事,但不能一竹竿打翻整船人。“我跟着《海峡时报》一起长大,我对他们有信心。我不希望因此而不帮助有需要的孩童。”

邱聪明日前向公司自首,承认私吞总数19万6500元的礼券及不合程序取得的款项。这些礼券是他负责的品牌及促销部作促销用途。

报业控股在16日发出文告,表示已解雇邱聪明。他已悉数归还这笔款项。