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## Children's musical weaves magic

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THE year is 2050. Inda's parents are separated, and they have left him in the care of his cousin Muda. Inda, 12, is a computer freak, while his cousin, 22, is a computer expert.

Inda is constantly being nagged by his cousin to eat and rest properly and take care of himself. Feeling lonely without his parents, Inda creates a computer game which he calls Taman Baginda, and quickly becomes engrossed in it.

The game tells the story of a prince named Baginda who, like Inda, first loses his father Paduka, and then his mother, Permaisuri. All that they leave him is their kingdom and the magical garden of Taman Baginda.

High up in the clouds, six fairies are watching the kingdom. They persuade their princess, Puteri Embun, who is not yet spoken for, to descend onto Taman Baginda to "smell the wonderful flowers", but really to meet the prince.

Once they enter the enchanted garden, Puteri Embun and her fairies are caught red-handed, and are to entertain Baginda before they are allowed to leave. Puteri Embun and Baginda fall in love.

Other characters come into play. The comic Bendahara Kajai Kotak and witch-doctor Pawang Nila, and the flowers of Taman Baginda all join in the action in discussing Baginda's newfound love Puteri Embun.

The flowers themselves have a little argument of their own, as to which among them would make a suitable present for the princess.

Meanwhile, as Inda is creating the computer game, cyberwaves are intercepted and four cybermates, Trini, Bob, Along and Lan Lobak, join in the creation of the game.

Trini is actually the Internet address of fashion-conscious trio Tini, Kuni and Yuni, who flirt playfully with shy Inda.

Along is the address for Along and Usu, who love war games; Bob loves a quiz and Lan Lobak just loves to disrupt other people's programmes.

All four keep interrupting Inda's game and Inda falls sick as a result of the confusion.

Then they discover how lonely Inda is without his parents, and help him resolve his problem by becoming his friends. This helps to conclude the game.

Taman Baginda, a children's musical, had its opening show in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, and will continue until Dec 17.

It is a multimedia theatre production that moves between the times, from the cyber age of 2050, to traditional kings and queens, to the magical world of fairies.

A lot of sophisticated information technology is in use, in contrast with the mystical atmosphere of the alam kayangan or mystical kingdom of the fairies.

It also features different music and dance, both from traditional Malay to dangdut to more contemporary rock and blues, courtesy of musical director Suhaimi Mohd Zain and dance choreographer Sharifah Mahani Syed Kassim.

Although it is a children's musical, Taman Baginda features snippets of youthful cynicism and sarcasm on issues like the currency crisis, the environment, the haze, surat layang, abuse and also AIDS.

And although mostly in Bahasa Malaysia, the actors successfully use different accents, from northern dialects to Bahasa Baku to everyday

Malay-English slang.

Fifty children aged seven to 15 will be in the limelight again for this second run of the musical directed by Zaifri Husin. (Taman Baginda was first staged in July as part of Flora Fest 97.)

These children form the core group of youngsters who attend Tunas Budaya's weekend programmes in dance, drama, music and vocals.

Tunas Budaya was formed in 1993 as part of Kompleks Budaya Negara and is dedicated to the development of children's theatre. It operates under the Federal Territory Culture and Arts Department (PKKWP).

Taman Baginda is the fourth in a succession of children's musicals staged by Tunas Budaya since last year. The first was Dewi Bunga, Lagenda, and Bawang Putih Bawang Merah, all of which have enjoyed second runs.

Taman Baginda is also the first children's musical to receive corporate sponsorship totalling RM250,000 from main sponsors FACB subsidiary Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai and Kretam Holdings Berhad, and also from organisers Utusan Malaysia and the New Straits Times.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is the patron of the event.

Produced under the cooperation of Pak Ngah Productions and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Taman Baginda will kick off an annual end-of-the-year school holiday programme which includes at least one children's theatre production.

Written by Adlin Aman Ramlee, Taman Baginda is being staged at the Malaysian Tourist Information Centre (Matic), Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur.

Showtimes are 3.30pm and 8.30pm. Tickets, priced at RM10, are available at Utusan Melayu head office, Jalan Chan Sow Lin, Kuala Lumpur, Tel: 03-2217055, ext 171/183; and Matic, Tel: 03-2648337/2643969.

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