

24/08/2001

A pretty big youth at 5

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WE are five! Who would have guessed. Not us. We work too hard to notice stuff like birthdays. Actually we've been so deeply involved in the intense world of journalism that it took our dear boss to remind us that this baby has turned five.

So, what have we done so far? Just too many things to list down... But let's give it a try.

Right, after our fourth birthday issue, we carried an article entitled What A Girl Wants. Fighting off hordes of women eager to contribute their opinions, we took advantage of the situation to harvest a few phone numbers (hey, we're only human you know... and underpaid too) from the babes at Sunway College.

At the end of the year, knowing how you're so into the future, we decided to become your crystal ball and run predictions for the coming year. The end product involved our crack team of ad-hoc astrologers staying up late into the night, compiling readings from many, many sources, and making up some along the way, ... in between loud cackles that split the night air.

Laughs aside, Jan 26 was a dark gloomy day for us at YouthQuake. It was when our very own Bangsar 59100 Ranjit committed suicide by jumping off the roof, taking along with him his teacher, Cikgu Daniel.

We had some really concerned readers calling up, saying the two should have lived through the ordeal. Sorry folks, but when two people fall from the fourth floor of a building, there aren't many options.

A major drug bust of syabu worth two billion got us hitting the streets to get the low-down on the drug. Our Cold Killer story was what came out of that prowling.

On finding out that the Book Of Life is almost ready, we snuck on to trace the mapping of the human DNA or the human genome. For you guys, we not only broke down each cell to a nucleus, but also gave some digestible meaning to the difficult terms.

Writer Jeremy Mahadevan's used his alter ego - the Little Guy - to make things nice, easy and fun. And guess what, we recently got a letter from one doctor in Singapore who congratulated him for a job well done and has requested for more copies. How's that for cool!

Now... when a girl dresses in a sexy manner, Is She Asking For It? We held a discussion following the rape of two teenage school girls in Kajang. What ensued was a battle of the sexes. The avalanche of mail after that totally caught us offguard.

It was surprising though, that some of the guys took a feminist view, citing that it was a girl's right to dress as she wished, as long as it wasn't vulgar. Way to go, modern man!

When certain quarters urged teenagers to get involved in the political scene, we went out to gauge the sentiments of the average Malaysian youth. The verdict: short of giving us the finger when asked if they would dabble in politics, it was unanimously agreed that politics should be left to the pakciks at the teh tarik stall (Between us, we did receive the finger from a few of them).

In May, we saluted mothers everywhere on Mother's Day and also discovered Shaggy's split personality disorder in an exclusive YouthQuake interview with the smooth talking angelic (not) superstar.

We also featured an article on teenage suicide and wrote about how we

wished they didn't. To all those teens who may have been on the verge of suicide before reading our article and are still alive today, teh tarik and other donations may be sent to the 4th floor of Balai Berita New Straits Times Press, Jalan Riong.

The YouthQuake team hit the streets to see just what causes teens to take to the bottle. To those of you who feel strongly about the issue, we hope you will do your best to help the cause.

Seriously, it wasn't easy getting people to come forward and publicly state their drinking problem. We were fortunate that a few of them shared their painful experiences with us, which they only did in the hope that others would learn from their mistakes.

"Dear Prime Minister" was our letter to our beloved Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, highlighting certain issues that "WE" - the youth of Malaysia - thought need be discussed at the Cabinet meeting on youth issues which was to have taken place on Aug 8.

YouthQuake stayed glued to the phone for days speaking to teens from across the country, gathering views about what they would like discussed at the cabinet meeting.

We have it in good faith that that article was read by our Prime Minister at his breakfast table. It's good to know someone's listening!

And how could we forget our StakeOut-TeenCrime story where we followed the cops in their raids on entertainment outlets in Bukit Bintang. Following the police around was an unforgettable experience. We were constantly being updated on the situation and fed with crime stories of the past.

We did, however, find it amusing that many of the big, beefy cops were shy and timid. Some were extremely cute too. Also, we know that none of us ever want to be on the wrong side of the law after being given a tour of the police station, especially the interrogation room!

Reminiscing over the past for this issue was a wonderful experience. We realised why you guys love reading YouthQuake so much. It's a pretty damn good paper, that's why!

BUT ... we wouldn't be where we are without the Reader. Yep. That's you. We'd like to thank you for supporting us over the years.

We've loved receiving your feedback. Our inbox floods every Monday with comments about the previous week's issues. Going through the e-mails provides plenty of laughs!

Of course, there is the occasional disgruntled reader who doesn't agree with our view. That's fine. In fact, we treasure your criticism (constructive ones) even more. Please keep your suggestions coming! That's how we learn and evolve. From our mistakes. We are not perfect, and we know that. After all, we're only five. A babe.

Responding to requests from readers, we have started Chomp!, a food column that features simple recipes and food reviews of places we've been to. Perhaps you guys can recommend some chic and cheap places to eat at.

We're also reviving our Read column, recommending some books we think you might like to read (it's a habit we're trying to cultivate amongst our writers).

Ah. The contests. That's when we receive mountains of mail from you guys. Can't blame you. Even we salivate at some of the giveaways. Right now, the Maxis.txt contest as well as the Writers Bloc 6 essay writing contest are the hottest.

The entries have been amazing. Some of you are really talented. Agatha Christies and Will Shakespeares in the making. We look forward to seeing as many of you at Sri Pena (Writers Bloc 6) next month.

Sigh ... now for the downside. There have been some problems with the delivery of prizes to contest winners. We extend our sincere apologies to

those involved.

But we need to make it clear that most of these prizes are handled by third parties. We will try our best to ensure you receive them in due time.

So, ladies and gentlemen, we hope you've enjoyed the ride. There are many more years to come. We have grown from strength to strength and will only get bigger and better, as you will!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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