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Budget cheer for young people

Rina Omar

BUDGET 2002 was announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently. So what, you say. Isn't it something only our parents would be interested in?

Wrong. You'd be surprised at how much has been allocated for youths.

Take a look at the breakdown of what the Budget has in store for you.

* RM81.8 million has been allocated for the Rakan Muda programme, which will continue with renewed features as part of the national agenda for youth development.

It is expected that 3.5 million youths will participate in 35,250 activities at national, State and district levels.

Sport and recreational activities will be given more focus, and include extreme and motor sports.

* In line with the national information and communications technology agenda to create a knowledgeable, informed and ICT-savvy society, RM205.5 million has been allocated for the computerisation of schools, as well as RM72.3 million for smart schools.

* RM900 million is provided for primary and secondary schools in rural areas to aid rural education development, as well as RM205.5 million for computer labs and other facilities in rural schools. A sum of RM100 million has been provided for six new matriculation colleges.

* Education facilities in Sabah and Sarawak will get a boost of RM180 million for the provision of potable water and electricity supply in schools, as well as upgrading and construction of teachers' houses.

* RM114.1 million is allocated for the development of Orang Asli, which includes efforts to reduce school dropouts through the Mind Development Programme, and the strengthening of the Pre-School Education Programme for the children.

* Students with hearing disabilities in institutions of higher learning will be able to have free education, food and lodging, as well as a monthly allowance of RM300. A total of RM403,000 has been allocated for 112 students next year.

* Private institutions of higher learning will be granted exemptions on import duty, excise duty and sales tax for purchases of educational equipment, which includes laboratory fittings, workshops, studios and language labs. This is also extended to private language institutions.

* RM7.7 million is provided for the National Social Service Programme under the Ministry of Youth and Sports to combat social ills among youths, especially high-school leavers.

* More good news. Ciggie prices are up by 20 per cent. You know how bad those fags are; maybe now you smokers will be motivated to kick the habit.

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