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Rewind 2001

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WOW! That was fast! Twelve months have zoomed by and we're at the end of 2001. Lots have happened. Let's just take a moment to revisit the people and stories that grabbed the headlines.

JANUARY

12: Holy Cow! Mad cow disease spreads in Europe. This leads the Malaysian Government to ban and withdraw all beef products from the countries in the European Union.

13: "No monkeying around with genes, please!". Gene tampering is frowned upon by a lot of people, says a survey. This is in relation to ANDi (which stands for "inserted DNA" backwards), the first genetically-modified monkey created by researchers at the Oregon Health Science University in the US.

18: Girls, have you any complaints? Think you've been treated unfairly? Get in touch with Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil. She's the head of the new Women's Affairs Ministry.

19: "From now on, there will be no more double promotion!" says the Education Ministry when it finds that students who "jumped" from Standard Three to Five, failed to do well in Standard Six.

23: The game of soccer shines with its nomination for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize for promoting understanding between nations.

FEBRUARY

14: It's Valentine's Day. You'll wilt at the price the florist asks you for a rose. Like Valentine's days gone by, flowers are just as expensive as ever. Care for a RM15 stalk of red rose anyone?

21: When 379 students in Kelantan could not raise money for their exam fees, the Sultan instructed the State Religious and Malay Customs Council to provide funds for them. They received RM200 each. Daulat Tuanku!

24: It's Jaws with a sharper bite when TV3 offers viewers a chance to watch its primetime programmes in 3-D.

27: The open certification system introduced in SPM last year works! Exam results released today showed significant improvement from the previous one.

MARCH

8: Memories of the May 13 riots resurface when racial clashes break out in squatter settlements in Kampung Medan, along Old Klang Road in KL. It's a painful wake-up call to all Malaysians that we should not take our multi-ethnic nation for granted.

14: Napster no more? The world's most popular file-sharing site is shut down, much to the anger of its 52 million users.

17: Michael Schumacher shows why the word "Shumi" is now part of the Malaysian vocabulary when he wins first place at the Malaysian Grand Prix 2001 at Sepang.

20: Local hip-hoppers Too Phat burst into the RIM International Charts with their album Plan B, a week after its release. At press time, the album is still there, making it the longest-staying local album on the chart.

APRIL

16: Kuala Lumpur Sentral Station, our country's new communications and transportation hub, begins operations today.

28: Nineteen-year-old Jenna Bush, daughter of US President George W. Bush, is stopped by police and given a citation for underage drinking in a

pub in Texas.

#### MAY

1: The month opens with National Youth Day celebrations, themed Volunteerism As A Catalyst to Unity. The event's annual parade is held at Stadium Perak in Ipoh, with various youth organisations participating.

13: Way to go! The International Islamic University Malaysia's debating team makes its way into the Malaysia Book of Records by ranking seventh in the 20th World Universities Debating Championship.

The event is hosted by the University of Sydney, Australia. IIUM competed against more than 24 teams from universities worldwide, including United Kingdom's Oxford and Stanford universities.

19: Two new subjects in English called Alternate English and English for Science and Technology will soon be introduced in Form Four. The proposal is made by the Education Ministry to curb the decline in English among secondary students nationwide.

22: The National Varsity Counselling Programme will soon be launched nationwide. The programme, organised by Barisan Nasional Youth with the co-operation of the Education Ministry, is aimed at providing advice to students who are unsure about varsity intake procedures and career opportunities with the guidance of experienced counsellors.

25: Where are the guys? According to the Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad, the female to male ratio at public universities is 65:35, or two female students to one male.

26: Westlife fans, behave! During their recent concert, thousands of fans rushed to the front section of the stage and caused a pandemonium. The crowd was told to find their seats or the lads refused to come out at all.

The members of the popular Irish group had to wait for more than one hour for their fans to settle down before beginning their concert in Bukit Jalil.

30: By 2005, students who are handicapped and with learning disabilities in Johor, Kedah, Perak and Sarawak will have new vocational schools - one in each State to cater to their needs.

#### JUNE

1: Everyday between 45 and 50 Malaysian teenagers pick up smoking, says Health Minister Chua Jui Meng. This alarming figure has caused the Ministry to introduce more anti-smoking areas in public places to discourage the habit.

13: Malaysians will be registered automatically as voters on their 21st birthday, according to a proposal made by the Election Commission.

According to the Commission's chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahmad, the Government has, in principle, agreed to the plan. At present, Malaysians who turn 21 need to register with the Commission during the registration exercise prior to elections.

14: Shocking! Most incest victims are under 16 years old, according to Bukit Aman police statistics. The findings also show a rise in incest cases in the country from 160 in 1999 to 198 last year.

15: Is your school falling apart? Don't worry, it will be renovated soon. The Education Ministry has allocated RM500 million to refurbish "old and defective schools", according to Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin, adding that the budget will also cover Orang Asli school buildings.

29: Universiti Malaya students lost their landmark building, the Dewan Tunku Chancelor, to a raging fire that gutted the building at 3.40am.

Also destroyed were graduation robes and mortar boards, among others. Losses were estimated at RM12.4 million. Arson was suspected. As a result, the graduation ceremony was postponed.

## JULY

4: Boys and girls, behave! There is a move to increase the number of teacher counsellors in secondary schools to keep indiscipline and juvenile delinquency, which is on the rise, in check, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

8: Suspected student activist Mohd Fuad Mohamed Ikhwan, 22, was arrested under ISA for allegedly threatening national security and public order. He was reportedly the student's National Action Front deputy president. He was questioned in connection with the probe into the June 29 fire that gutted UM's Dewan Tunku Chancelor.

18: Black Metal = evil? It's the blues for Black Metal when the music genre gets bad Press after a local tabloid associates it with the dark cults.

Cult members are believed to be involved in devil worship, indulging in free sex and dadah abuse.

In the weeks that followed, students in the country were detained for being suspected cult members. They were asked to undergo urine tests, and strip - to locate tattoos on their body.

## AUGUST

2: Goodbye, textbooks. In future, students will be using electronic books. To do this, students from 50 pilot schools nationwide have been chosen to undergo a trial run to test e-books.

With the technology, textbook contents can now be viewed on the screen of a small portable Internet-enabled computer.

4: After black metal, the heat is now on hip-hop.

Following an article Seks Bebas Hip-Hop (Free Sex in Hip-Hop) in a tabloid - which accused the music as being an agent of social ills, several artistes including Too Phat, Teh Tarik Crew and Positive Tone big boss Ahmad Izham Omar come forward to set the record straight by giving a Press conference.

7: Jail sentences for young offenders who commit serious crimes? Likely to be implemented soon, if the laws on the matter are reviewed.

The need arises following the heinous murder cases involving juveniles this year.

8: Telling signs. Teens get the rap again, this time for having 'hickies' or love bites. Labelled as 'red metal' or 'rose metal' by Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, he called on parents to supervise their children's activities.

9: With meritocracy now being stressed, university admission will not be as easy for Malay students anymore, unless they display high academic excellence.

26: All schools in the country will eventually run in single sessions. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says this is to ensure students enjoy better facilities including access to computers and that they don't have to share classrooms. So far 600 schools are enjoying the benefit of single sessions.

29: Private education institutions will be graded by the Education Ministry soon. This means that colleges will be categorised according to the institutions' facilities, teaching manpower and quality of education.

The goal is to help students receive value-for-money and quality education.

29: A juvenile detention centre will be established following the increase in the crime rate by those who are under 18.

At present, 1,300 juveniles are being held in prisons nationwide; some are under remand while waiting to be tried in the court of law. The proposal was made by the Prisons Department to the Home Ministry.

## SEPTEMBER

5: My card, great card. The new Government Multipurpose Card (GMPC) or MyKad contains identification, driver's licence, passport and MEPS Cash applications. The card can be used at immigration counters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, where cardholders need only insert their card and provide a thumbprint to go through the gates. Traffic police have also been given smart card readers that let them access driver's licence details. The National Registration Department has issued 600,000 cards since April.

8-17: Playing on home ground has its rewards. The XXI Sea Games 2001 held in Kuala Lumpur sees Malaysia bagging the largest haul of 111 gold medals. Shalin Zulkifli wins Malaysia's fifth and sixth golds in bowling, and Roslin Hashim wins our first gold in the men's badminton singles in 28 years. By the way, Roslin is also world No. 1. Nicol David grabs another gold in the women's squash singles.

11: The United States is under attack! The world watches in disbelief as not one but both towers of the World Trade Centre in New York are hit by hijacked US aeroplanes, supposedly masterminded by Osama bin Laden. This sparks a chain of events that included unsuspecting bearded and turbaned Sikh men being detained on suspicion of being members of the Taliban involved in the bombing.

#### OCTOBER

2: Royal blunder. Astro's Radio ERA mistakenly announces that the Yang di Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahudin Abdul Aziz Shah had died.

20: Budget cheer/jeer. Cheaper food items and more expensive cigarettes are among the announcements made at the unveiling of Budget 2002. RM81.8 million is allocated to the Rakan Muda community programme, targeted at more than 3.5 million students waiting for their SPM results.

#### NOVEMBER

13: Legal eagle wannabes wail as threats of nullifying the results of the Certificate of Legal Practice examination send hundreds running to the Legal Profession Qualifying Board for clarification.

22: Examination Syndicate bungles again! Two questions are cancelled in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia physics paper, and no marks are given. If you guys can't even get your definitions right, what more us?

22: Kids go crazy as the magic sets in. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone opens in theatres around the country.

28: YQ has done it again! The NST's "enfant terrible" walked away with the Shell Malaysia Excellence in Journalism Award for Outstanding Media Contribution in Promoting Youth Development in Malaysia - for the second time. Ha!

#### DECEMBER

13: Whither my protection? The Selangor State Government retracts its initial decision to ban the sale of condoms. Thank goodness. What was I thinking? Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo claims he was only concerned about the display of condoms which are located next to food items.

15: Here's wishing you rendang wishes and leman dreams. The balik kampung exodus begins as thousands of Malaysians make their annual trip back home for the Aidilfitri celebration.

19: Luis Figo of Real Madrid pips David Beckham of Manchester United to grab the Fifa World Player award. Two days earlier, Liverpool's Michael Owen was crowned European Player Of The Year.

20: Epic production The Lord of the Rings premieres worldwide today, almost 60 years after J.R.R. Tolkien wrote the book which the movie is based on.

24: The touchy issue of racial segregation in schools is dragged out from under the carpet by the National Union of Teaching Profession.

NUTP claims that over 200 schools are involved.  
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