

18/03/2002

Rakan Muda gets RM70m boost, more programmes to woo youths

Hayati Hayatudin

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The Rakan Muda programme has been given a shot in the arm with a RM70 million budget, and an expanded scope to attract a wider spectrum of youths.

Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the new programme would feature extreme sports and IT-related activities.

"With funding from the private sector, we can attract the interest of the four million youths aged between 15 and 25 in the country," he told the New Straits Times.

The programme has been revamped to offer activities such as speed wall climbing, in-line skating, cycling stunts, skate boarding, parasailing, motorcross and go-karting.

Courses on designing websites and other IT-related activities are also on the cards.

Of the RM70 million, RM37 million is for organising activities, RM8 million for upgrading and setting up infrastructure and facilities, and RM25 million for the establishment of Rakan Muda centres.

Last year's allocation of RM12 million was mainly for organising activities.

Hishammuddin said youths of today wanted more challenging activities and the Rakan Muda programme had been reorganised to cater to them.

"Rakan Muda is not static and with the revamp, we are still in line with the original objective to mould productive, responsible and strong-willed youths," he said.

Contrary to popular belief, he said, Rakan Muda has been successful since its inception seven years ago with the aim of reaching a wider audience.

New strategies to be introduced this year included closer co-operation with the private sector to ensure ongoing projects are implemented successfully.

"The private sector can view their contributions as part of their social obligation," Hishammuddin said.

The programme will also introduce the Rakan Muda Anugerah Perdana to reward active youths.

Youth and Sports director-general Datuk Raja Ruslan Raja Samah said among the problems plaguing Rakan Muda was the lack of manpower and inability to reach youths in rural areas.

"As part of our new strategies, we will engage more volunteers and provide them training and skills to lead Rakan Muda participants," he said.

The volunteers will be former social service officers under his Ministry and representatives of the Malaysian Association of Youth Clubs, Belia 4B and non-governmental organisations.

He said the Ministry would set up secretariats at public and private universities to ensure the programme reached the target groups.

It would also target industrial areas, shopping complexes and housing areas.

The Rakan Muda programme was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Oct 29, 1994.

hhayati@nstp.com.my

(END)