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PM: 27pc of total Budget allocation for education

THE Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has proposed the establishing of an Education Savings Fund to finance higher education and reduce the burden on parents in meeting the educational expenses of their children.

The Government would provide an initial allocation of RM1 billion for the fund, he said.

"The Government will give a 'ringgit for ringgit' matching grant on the savings of children from low income families," he said when tabling the Budget for next year in the Dewan Rakyat.

He hoped the programme would instil the culture of saving among children from the low income group.

Apart from that a loan programme for higher education through financial institutions would be set up whereby students could obtain loans from these institutions.

The Prime Minister said this was to ease the burden on the National Higher Education Fund which did not have sufficient allocations to meet the demand for loans from students.

Even though the Government had provided up to RM4.5 billion for the fund so far, for some 380,000 students it was still insufficient, he said.

"This programme needs RM3.5 billion more up to 2005," he said.

Dr Mahathir said financial institutions at present were required to channel part of their loan allocations for higher education loans in line with the Government's aspiration to develop human resources.

The Government would continue to focus on education by allocating 27 per cent of the total Budget 2003 allocation for this field, he said.

On the implementation of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, Dr Mahathir said the Government would allocate close to RM5 billion for the purpose from now to 2008.

"The bulk of the allocation will be for teachers training, providing launching grants for schools, teaching and learning aids and also basic facilities and physical infrastructure including for Information and Communication Technology," he said.

To ensure effective implementation of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, teachers would be supplied with computer notebooks, LCD projectors and related equipment.

"For this purpose, RM978.7 million will be spent this year and next year," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would also allocate RM850 million to implement the single-session-schools, with a view to providing students more time in schools not only for learning but also for co-curricular activities.

"With this our children will spend more time in schools and not get involved in unhealthy activities," he said.

He said it was the Government's hope that parents would spend quality time with their children.

Dr Mahathir said the single-session school system was operating at 91 primary and 81 secondary schools since this year while the system would be implemented in 129 primary and 138 secondary schools next year.

He also said 43 primary and 51 secondary single-session schools would be built.

The Government had allocated RM14.294 billion for primary and secondary

school education and RM8.685 billion for higher education in the Budget.