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It happened in 2003!

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WHAT a year, what a year! We've had war, disease, studied Mathematics and Science in English and ... 'gasp' ... Ashton Kutcher proposed to the well-preserved Demi Moore. Here's a round-up of youth-related events that took place throughout 2003, in case you were asleep for the most part of the year or, if like most teens, you didn't read the newspapers!

JANUARY

2: Back to school

The new school year kicks off with the implementation of Mathematics and Science syllabi in English. Now, what's the English equivalent of "penjamilan"?

4: Laptops for schools

To facilitate the transition to teaching Mathematics and Science in English, all schools have received laptop computers, LCD projectors and software. The Education Ministry has also announced that contract teachers can now work until they are 65 years old to address the shortage of experienced teachers in Science, Mathematics and English.

18: No more easy way out for
SPM holders

Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia holders can no longer enrol directly into degree courses. The Education Ministry has said that foundation or diploma courses, or the STPM is a prerequisite.

20 - 26: X Games in KL

The Asian X Games V and ESPN Junior X Games IV were held at the KLCC park and the Mines Resort, Kuala Lumpur. Young Malaysians emerged champions in the Junior X-Games for the second year running with a booty of four golds.

FEBRUARY

14: Even Stevens at school

We may soon have to say goodbye to private schools and national-type schools as the government has plans to restructure the existing national school system to attract students of all races.

21: Longer school hours in Perlis

Secondary school students in Perlis can look forward (or not) to longer school hours from March. According to Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim. English and Arabic will be taught.

26: Improved SPM, STPM results

Cheers all round as the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) examination results showed overall improvement. A total of 663 candidates obtained 1As in all subjects in the SPM.

MARCH

3: Sultan launches foundation
for youths

Talented but disadvantaged Malaysian youths can now turn to the the Yayasan Raja Muda Selangor launched by the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah. The Sultan has launched the trust fund under his son, Raja Muda Tengku Amir Shah, 12, who will contribute a substantial amount from his monthly income to the fund until he turns 21.

APRIL

21: Bangsar doctor slashed
to death

Two unemployed youths and a former deputy minister's son have since been charged with the murder of a medical practitioner. Dr T. Ariaratnam, 66, was slashed on the head while his assistant, P. Vasudran, was seriously injured during a pre-dawn attack at a polyclinic in Lorong Maarof, Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. Two others remain at large.

29: Police Corps in university

Want a bod of steel? Join the police corps! Universiti Utara Malaysia chalks a first in the country with a police volunteer corps in an institution of higher learning. Open only to first-year students, they will possess the power to arrest and issue summonses as provided under the Police Act 1967.

MAY

26: Gone are the VCDs

Petaling Street will never be the same again with the noticeable absence of pirated VCDs. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave police two weeks to come down hard on those responsible for the distribution of pornographic video compact discs and illegal electronic gaming machines.

JUNE

17: MyKad under utilised

Despite being equipped with useful features like Touch 'n' Go and MEPS Cash, as well as containing the driver's licence and passport information, the five million MyKad holders are not fully utilising card. National Registration Department director-general Datuk Azizan Ayob attributed this to the lack of awareness of MyKad's features.

20: Double trouble

Weeks after the all-clear signal for SARS, Guangdong is hit by another epidemic, Japanese encephalitis. Health officials said 18 children have succumbed to the outbreak that has infected 211 people.

21: Potter Mania

Queues started as early as 6am at major bookstores Kinokuniya and MPH in the Klang Valley as excited fans waited to purchase the fifth part of the Harry Potter series, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

24: Beckham comes for a visit

David Beckham met thousands of fans in Kuala Lumpur for nearly three hours at the Kuala Lumpur Badminton Stadium. Beckham played several versions of kickabouts with lucky fans selected through competitions organised by sponsor Castrol. He also donated RM21,400 to the Montfort Boys Home.

JULY

1: Dad-napper

COLLEGE student P. Jacob Jebaraj, 20, was charged with kidnapping, which carries the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Jacob kidnapped his father for a RM50,000 ransom which was paid by his mother. The kidnap victim, Ponnusamy Nalathamby, still felt it was his fatherly duty to engage a lawyer to represent the youth in court.

2: Teen guilty of murder

A 13-year-old boy was found guilty of murder by the High Court for stabbing his tuition teacher's daughter more than 20 times last year .

AUGUST

12: School bullies

Eight Form Five students of Sekolah Menengah Teknik in Batu Pahat were accused of causing grievous hurt to a classmate. The victim suffered serious injury to his liver and bladder.

22: High society

Twenty Form Five students of Sekolah Tuanku Abdul Rahman in Ipoh were expelled for alleged involvement in gangsterism. They were believed to have revived a feared group, outlawed last year, that terrorised juniors.

31: KL Monorail launched

Shopping in the Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur, is now more convenient with the launch of the KL Monorail. Want to check out the latest kid on the block, the Berjaya Times Square? Just hop on at the Sentral station in Brickfields and you'll be there in 10 minutes!

SEPTEMBER

11: Cheaper CDs and VCDs
from January

We can now stretch our skimpy allowance further, thanks to cheaper CDs which will be capped at RM21 for local and RM29 for international albums, while VCDs will be sold at RM14 for both local and international movies.

29: Berjaya Times Square opens

Shopping becomes a more strenuous sport with the opening of the cavernous Berjaya Times Square. It includes a shopping mall, theme park, office space and five-star service apartments.

OCTOBER

15: Linkin Park rocks KL

Praise the powers-that-be for allowing Linkin Park to perform in Kuala Lumpur. The party raged on at Merdeka Stadium, attracting fans from as far as Johor and Penang.

23: New TV channels

Couch potatoes rejoice as there are now two more TV stations to tune in to. 8TV, touted to 'revolutionise' the local TV industry, targets young urban audiences as well as the Chinese community while Channel Nine, another free TV station, was launched the day before. Woo-hoo!

31: Dr Mahathir retires

A historical moment for Malaysia as Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad retires after running the country for 22 years. Stepping into his shoes is Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who was sworn in as the country's fifth prime minister.

NOVEMBER

3: "Work with me, not for me"

That is the mantra of prime minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who started work at his new office. And experiencing it first-hand were 18 YouthQuake readers who had breakfast with Pak Lah at his office in Putrajaya two weeks earlier. He asked them for their views on various issues and to send him their wish lists. What can we say? The PM rocks!

3: Arghh... exam season!

Making the final lap of secondary school life are 420,058 Fifth Form students who began their SPM examination.

Stiffer traffic penalties

'P' drivers take extra precaution after the Road Transport Department's announcement to revoke the licences of probationary drivers who are booked for traffic offences two weeks before and after Hari Raya. What's worse, they'll have to wait a year to re-sit their driving tests. Groan!

22: Free your mind

SPM's over! After months of being chained to the desk, Fifth Formers kiss their textbooks and test papers goodbye.

22: Murder in the family

Two teenaged sisters and their two male friends were charged with the murder of the girls' stepfather Hans Herzog. Herzog was slashed to death at his home in Subang Jaya, Selangor, on Nov 12.

DECEMBER

5: SEA-ing gold

Young Malaysians held the our flag high at the Vietnam Sea Games when Leong Mun Yee earned a gold for diving. Sprinter Nazmizan Muhammad, 22, broke Malaysia's 36-year wait to win a gold in the 100m dash.

9: Call to National Service

Frantic exchanges of text messages and telephone calls were the order of the day as 17-year-olds scrambled to find out whether they had been selected as the first batch of National Service recruits who begin training this year.

18: The King cometh

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King opened to hordes of eager fans who had bought tickets to the movie a week in advance. Hard-core fans braved fatigue, cold and hunger (well, almost!) to endure the 12-hour marathon screening of all three LOTR movies!

29: PMR results are out!