

Exercise? Not us, say youth

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PUTRAJAYA: A study of youth in Malaysia has turned up a disturbing fact — there is a distinct lack of interest in exercise, sports activities and clubs and associations.

The 4,807 youth between the ages of 15 and 40 polled in the study scored low where these activities were concerned and the Youth and Sports Ministry considers these facts an “eye-opener”.

Out of the maximum score of 100, these three areas garnered measly scores of 28.8, 14.3 and 19.9.

This dismal finding was garnered from the first Malaysian Youth Index (IBM) — a study carried out in March and April.

The study was done by the

ministry’s Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development (IPPB). It was based on 36 indicators divided into eight “domains” — self development, social interaction, health, identity, potential, media access, free time and deviant behaviour.

Scores were given to each indicator and these scores were then calculated into an overall score for the domain.

The three indicators in which the youth scored badly were grouped into one of the domains — free time.

All other domains recorded encouraging results.

(A score of 0 to 25 is a “bad” score; 26 to 50 “moderate”; 51 to 75 “good”; and, 76 and above “excellent”.)

IPPB chief executive Prof Dr Samsudin Rahman said there was some concern over

the lack of interest in exercise, sports activities and clubs and associations as this could have detrimental effects.

Although the overall score for the health domain was 97.7, indicating that Malaysian youth were healthy, he said the low score for exercise and sports activities could mean the health of youth in the long run would be affected.

“Statistics (by the Health Ministry) show that more and more people under 40 are having heart problems.”

The categories under the sports indicator showed badminton being the most popular sport, although this too only scored 36.8. Football was second on the list with a score of 28.2 while every other sport scored lower than 20.

Exercise, walking and jogging received moderate scores

(58.5 and 51.5, respectively), indicating that a little over half the number of youth polled engaged in those activities.

But the overall score for that indicator was pulled down by extremely low scores for aerobic exercise (score of 8.4) gymnasium activities (11.5) and swimming (14.3).

Samsudin said the IBM was handed over to the ministry two weeks ago. It would be

produced every year.

National Youth and Sports Department director-general Datuk Suroya Selamat said the IBM would be used to help plan programmes for youth.

“It certainly was an eye-opener.

“There are areas where we need to improve our programmes.

“Although the ministry has conducted studies on youth

before, the IBM is more empirical and will be a good guide for our planning.”

Suroya said the ministry would focus more on domains, other than free time, which scored lower in the index.

Although these domains — self-development, identity and potential — all had “good” scores, he said the target was to move them up to the “excellent” score range.