

# RM2b education boost

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## Extra allocation under 9MP to bridge rural-urban divide

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**PULAU BUM BUM (Sabah):** Some two million rural school children will benefit from the Prime Minister's speedy move to narrow the urban-rural education gap.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announced that another RM2.6bil would be allocated under the 9th Malaysia Plan (9MP) to narrow the disparity in the quality of education between urban and rural areas. He said this on this poverty-stricken island off Semporna.

The huge amount is in addition to the RM9.7bil already approved for education under the 9MP.

At the national launch of the Premier Rural Education Quantum Leap Programme at Sekolah Pusat SK Bum Bum here, Abdullah outlined the infrastructure as well as incentives for rural teachers and assistance needed to bridge the gap.

Abdullah said that 280,000 rural students living at hostels would receive an increased food allocation from RM8 to RM12 per person per day. There would also be an increase in food allocation for 550,000 in day schools.

Abdullah said rural school teachers, whom he described as "our heroes," would get between RM500 and RM1,500 depending on the remoteness of their schools, besides an allowance and insurance to *balik kampung* once a year.

He said the Government would also be building 3,438 units of new teachers' quarters under 406 pro-



**Autograph, please:** Primary Six student Abdul Kadir Madel of SK Bum Bum asking Abdullah for an autograph at Pulau Bum Bum yesterday while Education Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussien and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman look on.

jects as well as renovating others under 802 projects.

He said among the infrastructure development to be implemented immediately were 24-hour power supply for 900 schools and clean water supply for 300 schools nationwide, mainly in Sabah and Sarawak and rural areas largely populated by orang asli in the peninsula, by the year-end.

He said the Government would also set up 2,436 pre-school classes for 60,900 pupils as well as increase

the number of computers by 17,500 to achieve the target of one computer to five pupils.

About 9,079 classrooms will be built or replaced for primary schools while a further 6,039 classrooms will be built for secondary schools in rural areas, he said, adding that 2,615 primary and secondary schools would be refurbished.

There is also a plan to build 281 new hostels as well as refurbish 170 more, he said his speech at the school where over 3,000 people attended.

He said 400 schools would be equipped with computer labs and web television would be set up in 5,869 schools, which would allow at least 500 under-enrolled schools to hold teleconferences with their urban counterparts, while 200 schools would be equipped with satellite phones and wireless fax.

The Prime Minister also said 480 vocational workshops would be built for rural schools.

"We must fast track education development, we need a fast track leap so any development made can bridge the gap between rural and urban schools," said Abdullah, the first Malaysian premier to visit the remote island.

He said the Government must ensure that all the children be given the best possible opportunities to study.

He later opened the access centre of the school and participated in a five-minute teleconference with SK Putrajaya in Peninsular Malaysia.

Pulau Bum Bum, a 15-minute boat ride from Semporna town, is an island comprising largely Bajau-Suluk people. Its name means "meeting place" in local language.

The island has about 27,000 people, mainly fishermen, who send their children to five primary schools and one secondary school. One proposal is to build a RM100mil bridge to the island.