

RM2.6b to improve rural schools

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SEMPORNA: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday announced a whopping RM2.6 billion additional allocation to improve the quality of education and infrastructures in rural and interior areas.

The prime minister said the substantial amount was in addition to the RM9.7 billion approved to the Education Ministry under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP).

More than two million students studying in the rural and interior schools would benefit from the additional funds, he said.

The allocation under a special programme to narrow the rural-urban education gap will be used to build educational infrastructures in rural and interior areas, provide information and communication technology facilities, incentives for

teachers and student intervention and support programmes, he said when launching the programme at Pulau Bum Bum, a five-minute boat ride from here.

The nationwide programme is focused on narrowing the education divide under the National Education Blueprint 2006-2010.

Abdullah said the focus would be to provide 24-hour electricity supply to 900 schools and clean water to 300 schools in rural and interior areas.

"We will ensure schools in the interiors of Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia have 24-hour power supply.

"There are still 300 schools with no clean water supply. So, all these schools will be provided with clean water and power supply. This will be implemented and completed by end of this year," he said.

Through the additional and

9MP allocations, Abdullah said the government would build 2,436 classrooms for 60,000 pre-schoolers including 41 units for orang asli children.

He said 17,500 computers would also be provided to realise the objective of one computer for every five students.

The allocations would also be used to build two more centralised schools, one in Sabah and another in Sarawak, with slight adjustments.

A total of 9,079 primary school classrooms and 6,039 secondary school classrooms would also be built from the allocations while 2,046 primary and 569 secondary schools would be upgraded.

The government would also build 281 new hostels and upgrade 170 existing ones to provide lodging comfort for students in rural and interior areas. - Bernama