

No More School Fees, Additional Money Assistance For Affordable Education Bernama

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 28 (Bernama) -- About 457,000 Year One students will be enrolling in schools next year without having to pay for school fees for the first time in the country's education history.

They will be part of the 5.3 million primary and secondary students in government schools throughout the country who will benefit from the nation's recently announced free education policy and also enjoy an additional RM100 assistance to help them prepare for the coming school session.

Form Six students, however, will receive book vouchers worth RM200 as a substitute for the school assistance.

The announcement on the free education was made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak when he tabled the 2012 Budget in the Dewan Rakyat last October, and was lauded by the nation.

In making the proposal, Najib said it was to ensure that all Malaysian children irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds had access to quality and affordable education.

Prior to this, students in primary and secondary schools were required to pay RM24.50 and RM33.50 respectively for co-curriculum activities, internal test papers, Malaysian Schools Sports Council fees and insurance premium.

The abolition of the payments involves an additional allocation of RM150 million. Under the 2012 Budget, RM50.2 billion was allocated for the education sector besides RM1.9 billion for development expenditure.

This shows the seriousness of the government when it comes to education and to establish Malaysia as a center of academic excellence.

Many parties, especially the National Parent-Teacher Association described the abolishment of the miscellaneous fees for primary and secondary students for the next school session as a very meaningful gift for the people.

The RM100 assistance given to Year One to Form Five students on the other hand, is aimed at helping to ease the burden of parents with schoolgoing children, especially those with many children.

The assistance, while applauded and awaited by many people, was questioned by several opposition members in the Dewan Rakyat, saying that the handing over of money, which the government had started early November, as "not according to procedure because the allocation was only approved for 2012".

However, the Education Ministry explained that the assistance was sourced directly from this year's Treasury Consolidated Settlement of Accounts Fund, which was approved by the Treasury, so the Ministry did not have to use next year's budget allocation for the purpose.

There were also some schools that did not hand over the whole sum of RM100 to the students, and this caused Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to repeatedly remind the schools involved to return the balance.

Besides the free education and the money assistance, the cabinet decision on the Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) has also been a nation's hot topic for the year.

Recently, Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, announced that the Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in primary schools in Bahasa Malaysia would be fully implemented primary schools in 2016, and in secondary schools in 2021

Students already pursuing studies under the PPSMI system get to continue with the system until they complete their formal schooling while at the same time, pupils newly entering schools will follow the new system, which is the Elevation of Bahasa Malaysia and Empowerment of the English Language (MBMMBI).

The PPSMI was introduced by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2003 with aim of improving students' mastering of Science and Mathematics. However, the implications of the PPSMI on cultural and national identity had also been debated since its implementation.

From the recently approved Budget 2012, the education sector also received other benefits including a RM1 billion special fund for the construction, improvement and maintenance of schools and book vouchers for all students at the tertiary level.

Not forgetting the teachers, the prime minister also announced five promotion methods for them, which will take effect on January 1, 2012.

The five promotion methods, allocated only to the teaching profession, comprises promotions to fill vacancies, promotion given Special to a holder of a post (Khas Untuk Penyanggah), time-based promotion, promotion for excellent principals or headmasters and promotion for excellent teachers.

The new promotion methods was hoped would boost the spirit of about 480,000 teachers around the country in offering better quality education services for the nation.

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