

RM500,000 for youths

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By Hayati Dzulkifli

KOTA KINABALU: The State Ministry of Youth and Sports will be spending RM500,000 this year to provide financial assistance to youth associations at district-level and schools.

Disclosing this to *Daily Express*, Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun said the main purpose of the allocation is to encourage youths to be actively involved in associations so as to prevent them from being lured into negative activities.

"It is sad to say that the level of youth participation in associations is very poor in Sabah, whereby less than 30 per cent of them are joining associations.

"The poor participation could be attributed to the existing myriad of lifestyle these days and the youths are more focused on pleasure-seeking activities like in entertainment rather than joining associations to learn and gain knowledge that could prepare them for challenges," he said.

Masidi was speaking after opening a drug eradication programme at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), here, Saturday.

About 300 students aged 13 to 15

took part in the one-day programme organised by KOMETS group which is a combination of 75 students from three majors – Communication, TESL and School of Information Technology Engineering – who are doing off-campus studies at UMS.

Hence, he said, the State government would be channeling the allocation this year directly to the associations, the amount depending on the type and number of activities that would benefit youths in the respective districts and schools.

"As long as the activities are involving youths and benefit them, we will provide assistance in term of funds to them.

"The amount may not be sufficient to all but the support given is already a manifestation of the Government's seriousness to boost youth participation in associations," he said.

Masidi said they are also aiming to see two new associations involving youths being set up in each district to provide for more choices to them as well as to encourage participation.

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Students among drug addicts 'worrying'

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Hence, he is expecting to see 48 new associations in Sabah within this year. Currently, he said, there are a few active youth associations in the State.

On recent statistics by the National Anti-Drugs Agency (Nada) that revealed 388 of the 2,196 addicts detected nationwide in January were below the age of 13, he expressed worry that the problem was affecting even younger people.

"I do not have the statistics for young groups among the drug addicts in Sabah but from what I read in the newspapers, the statistics among students is worrying.

"I hope the recent statistics would make our younger generation, teachers and parents realise this existing problem and take positive steps to ensure our youths would not get influenced into taking drugs," he said.

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH