

Better book voucher deal

FUTURE PLAN: It may be used to buy all learning material, says DPM

TASNIM LOKMAN
SERDANG
news@nst.com.my

THE government will consider extending the 1Malaysia book voucher to cover not only the purchase of books but also other learning materials.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, when responding to a suggestion from Universiti Putra Malaysia students at a gathering at the university here yesterday, said he would bring up the proposal for discussion in the cabinet meeting tomorrow.

The suggestion was made by National Students Representative Council president Muhamad Anas Misbahudin who, in his speech, had also called for the voucher amount to be increased.

Muhyiddin said Anas's suggestion would be taken into consideration, subject to government's affordability.

"I think, God willing, it could be increased in future,how much the increase will depend on the national financial situation," Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, said.

The 1Malaysia book vouchers were first given out in 2012 at a rate of RM250 per student.

On another request that the government consider a discounted rate for bus tickets for students, Muhyiddin said he would forward the suggestion to the Transport Ministry and the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD).



Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin handing a mock 1Malaysia Book voucher for RM325 million to National Students Representative Council president **Muhamad Anas Misbahudin** (second from right) at Universiti Putra Malaysia in Serdang yesterday. With them are Second Education Minister **Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh** (second from left), Deputy Education Minister II **P. Kamalanathan** (right). Pic by Ghazali Kori

He said the matter was out of the ministry's jurisdiction, and should be discussed with transport companies and bus operators to ask them to give a special discount to students.

In his speech, Muhyiddin said the Malaysian Higher Education Development Plan was being finalised before it was presented to the public by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on April 7.

"This plan shows how serious we are in preparing the best education policy for the graduates and future

generations."

Muhyiddin said the public could expect the plan to highlight the importance of having good communication and thinking skills, as well as leadership qualities.

He said the empowerment of both Bahasa Melayu and English would be given emphasis.

He said many private companies had approached him, saying that most local graduates had poor communication skills and this had affected their chances of getting hired.

"That is why we want to highlight this in the plan — language and communication.

"We cannot ignore our national language but English is also necessary as we have made it our official second language.

"What is the point if you are able to write but unable to speak fluently? The plan will ensure that our graduates improve their language proficiency, but it is even better if they could converse in other languages, as this will increase their employability rate."