

## The Star Education fund exceeds RM7m mark

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Star Education Fund 2003 passed the RM7mil mark with 35 partners contributing 300 scholarships.

The educational institutions, both local and foreign, pledged the awards during a ceremony to mark the opening of the Star Education Fair 2003 at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday.

Four institutions which joined the Fund for the first time are Edith Cowan University, Australia; Institut Teknologi Maklumat Nirmal, Ipoh; PJ College of Art & Design, Petaling Jaya; and Sentral Education Sdn Bhd, Penang.

The other contributors are: Alif Creative Academy, Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology, Equator Academy of Art, FTMS-De Montfort University, HELP Institute, Institute Advertising, Communication and Training, Informatics, Institut Perkim-Goon, Inti College Malaysia, Inti College Penang, KLC Centre for Higher Studies, KDU College, LimKokWing Institute of Creative Technology, and Metropolitan College.

The sponsors also include the Malaysian Institute of Integrative Media, Millennium Institute of Technology, Malaysia University of Science and Technology, Nilai College, Penang Medical College, Prime College, Pusat Teknologi dan Pengurusan Lanjutan (Sungai Petani), Rima College, Saito Academy, SAL Group of Colleges, Sedaya International College, SEG International Bhd, Stamford



**FUTURE PLANS:** Abdul Rafie talking to some of the students about the courses they are thinking of taking as Ng looks on.

College, Sunway College, Taylor's College, The One Academy and the University of Nottingham in Malaysia.

Representatives from the institutions presented the awards to Education director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat. Also present was *The Star* group chief editor Datuk Ng Poh Tip.

In her speech, Ng said the fund was entering its 10th year and expressed *The Star's* appreciation and gratitude to all the partners who had generously contributed to the Fund.

"Deserving and qualified students can now look forward to 300 scholarships worth RM7mil offered by 35 partners-in-education, local and foreign.

"*The Star* hopes more educational institutions will come forward to contribute to this

good cause as we continue to mould a new generation of high achievers through the fund."

Abdul Rafie commended the fund for its growth - from offering scholarships worth RM700,000 in 1994 to this year's total of RM7mil.

*The Star* also awards scholarships to students through the fund.

Other than setting up a booth at the fair, the fund team also held a talk yesterday and will hold another today at 11.30am in Bilik Perhentian to educate scholarship hopefuls on the various courses offered and the application process.

The closing date for applications is March 7. Application forms can be downloaded from <http://thestar.com.my/education/colleges/scholarships.html>.

# Languages to promote cultural ties

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A total of 1,457 national primary schools have included Arabic Communications, Tamil or Chinese in their formal curriculum as *Bahasa Tambahan* under a new Education Ministry policy.

The upgrading of such languages from "pupils own language" (POL) classes held after school to languages offered to every pupil within the formal timetable is to promote a "better understanding of each other's culture," said Education director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat.

He said the urban and rural schools selected to spearhead the programme were those that already had POL classes in place for one of the languages.

"The subjects offered under the *Bahasa Tambahan* programme are for pupils who want to learn an additional language.

"We are not going to force anyone to take it, but they are expected to as the lessons are part of the timetable.

"The aim of the programme is to enable students to understand and appreciate different cultures and languages.

"However, due to factors like the availability of teachers for the subjects at the moment, it is not yet possible for all schools



to offer all three languages," he added.

Of the 1,457 schools, 900 are offering Arabic Communications, a new subject altogether, while 277 have Tamil language classes and 218 have Chinese in the timetable.

"We have to be realistic and implement the programme in stages based on the availability of teachers. Various measures are being undertaken to expand the programme.

"The recent move to extend the retirement age of contract teachers was partly to ease the shortage of teachers for these subjects as well," said Abdul Rafie.

He was speaking to reporters yesterday after launching the Star Education Fair 2003 at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

This is the first year *Bahasa Tambahan* is being introduced as a subject option for primary schools.

Although the ministry aims to offer more subjects in the long run, only Arabic Communications, Tamil and Chinese will be offered in the initial stages.

In his speech, Abdul Rafie congratulated *The Star* for successfully organising its 15th Education Fair, aimed at informing school leavers of their tertiary education choices.

"Today, not only are more students studying overseas financed either by their parents or government and private scholarships, they also have the option of obtaining a foreign degree without leaving the country.

"This just shows how far the education industry has developed in the past two decades," he said.

Abdul Rafie urged both public and private education institution operators to ensure quality in the delivery of their programmes.

"We have at present 23,000 foreign students from 141 countries pursuing tertiary programmes in our institutions. This is a sure sign that Malaysia is fast becoming a regional centre of educational excellence.

"Nevertheless, the private education sector has to be on guard so as not to allow the lead we have to slip," he added.