

BY SIMRIT KAUR, S. INDRAMALAR, GAVIN GOMEZ & JOANNE LIM

AFTER 15 years, the Star Education Fair remains the most successful of such fairs, judging by the 100,000 visitors to the two-day event, which featured 130 exhibitors and 213 booths this year. And the Star Education Fund, in its 10th year, awarded RM7mil worth of scholarships under its banner.

Although the fair – at the Putra World Trade Centre last weekend – has always attracted a large number of students and parents shopping for suitable courses and institutions to enrol in, the response this year was phenomenal.

On the first day, the fair which was opened by Education Director-General Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat, attracted more than 50,000 visitors and the figure was more or less the same on the second day.

Competition to attract students was rife and could be seen from the great lengths many exhibitors went to – from spending tens of thousands of ringgit on attractive booths and conducting games and contests *a la* the "Wheel of Fortune" to handing out small souvenirs like bags, pens and bookmarks.

The exhibitors ranged from public higher educational institutions and private colleges to banks and financial institutions offering loans as well as private education and career counselling organisations.

Also present to field questions and queries about recognition of institutions and courses were officers from the Education Ministry's private education department.

First time participants at this year's fair were the Royal Malaysian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Army (Mindef), both of whose booths were deluged by visitors – some genuinely interested and others naturally curious.

"We received many enquiries about our training programmes and about working in the army too. We brought with us about 2,000 brochures as well as souvenirs and most of

Fair gets bigger and better

them were gone by the end of the first day!" said a Royal Malaysian Navy Lieutenant on duty.

"Some students, curious about the nature of the job, wanted to know whether they would get to travel if they enlisted," he said.

Like the lieutenant, many first-time exhibitors were pleasantly surprised by the huge crowd that came to the fair. Old-timers were equally pleased, not just with the response from potential students but also the nature of the enquiries.

"Students are definitely more focused. Although accompanied by their parents, the students were the ones asking the questions!" said Jodie Ray Dell, lecturer at FTMS-De Montfort University.

"In past years, they (students) would leave the questions to their parents," added Dell.

"We also noticed an increased interest in professional programmes like the ACCA and CIMA, etc. There were also enquiries from working professionals who were interested in taking up specific professional papers to upgrade their skills."

Not short on visitors was the Star Education Fund booth. This year, the fund has 300 scholarships worth RM7mil from 35 educational institutions on offer.

Four institutions joined the fund for the first time this year – Edith Cowan University, Australia; Institut Teknologi Maklumat Nirmal, Ipoh; PJ College of Art & Design, Petaling Jaya; and Sentral Education, Penang.

The other contributors to the fund 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



BINGO! Fair visitor Nur Azrinawati (in white) is enthralled by the 'Wheel of Fortune' game at the Kolej Legenda booth.