Malaysia at 52 in global school placing

Rankings based on maths and science

BY KAREN CHAPMAN
educate@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia is placed 52 out of 76 countries in a global school rankings titled Universal Basic Skills: What Countries Stand To Gain published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In the top 10 (in descending order) are Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan (in joint fourth place), Finland, Estonia, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Canada.

"The starting point is comparative data for 81 countries that have taken part in either Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) or Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (Timss)," said the report, which added that most of these countries took part in the 2012 Pisa assessment.

In educationtoday blog, OECD's director of Directorate for Education and Skills Andreas Schleicher said the "report shows that the quality of schooling in a country is a powerful predictor of the wealth that the country will produce in the long run." Schleicher said the report demonstrated that Finland was not highly rated in the 80s and 90s but the plans they laid have made them a recognised education superpower today.

— P. KAMALANATHAN

Formula to improve language and writing skills

BY LOSHANA K. SHAGAR
loshana@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: A person's language and writing skills can be improved like how mathematical problems are solved by using a set of formulae, says a Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) senior lecturer.

Dr Ghazali Lateh had managed to create his own formula for students to improve their writing skills.

"When I was a school teacher, I found that many of my students struggled to master social sciences like languages.

"But they fared better in subjects with a fixed set of problem-solving methods like mathematics.

"A thought struck my mind — why not develop a formula for languages and writing, which the students can apply the same way they do with maths?" he said.

After 10 years of research, Dr Ghazali, from UPM's Department of Languages and Humanities, managed to discover a formula that worked not only for students, but also for teachers who wanted to simplify their lessons.

Dr Ghazali, who spoke on the sidelines of Majlis Gemilang Akademia Putra at UPM yesterday, was one of two senior UPM lecturers who were awarded the Vice Chancellor Fellowship Award in the Young Educators category.

The other recipient, Dr Hafandi Ahmad, was awarded for his modern approach to education, which chose a more hands-on, student-centric method to teach undergraduates in the field of veterinary sciences.

A neurophysiology specialist, Dr Hafandi uses social media like Facebook to reach out to his students and engage them in their studies.

The awards were presented by the university's chancellor, Selangor Ruler Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah.