The Star

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Sunday, 29 Sep 2024



Azman (inset): The goal is to ensure a more robust national education ecosystem for all.

2013-2025 blueprint drives improvements in education system

MANY improvements have happened over the past 11 years, thanks to the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025, says the Education Ministry.

Its director-general Azman Adnan said among its achievements is the increased enrolment at all levels of schooling, indicating growing confidence in the national education system. This can be seen in the rise in preschool enrolment for children aged 4+ and 5+ over the past three years (see infographic).

The same trend is evident in upper secondary enrolment, where more than 90% of teenagers are in school.

“Upper secondary enrolment has been given attention to ensure students complete their secondary education and obtain the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) to enhance their employability opportunity,” he said.

At the same time, the school dropout rate has consistently decreased, thanks to interventions carried out by the ministry to keep students in school.“In addition to the mainstream route, attention has been given to increasing enrolment in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

“Once considered a second choice, this field has now achieved an enrolment rate increase of 10.51% and a high employability rate, exceeding 95% each year. This demonstrates that TVET is recognised by the industry and serves as an alternative educational pathway alongside academics,” he said.

He also said the ministry is now focusing efforts to ensure that the employability of TVET graduates align with their fields of study.

The ministry has also ensured inclusivity through special education for students with special education needs (SEN), and gifted education programmes for students with an intelligence quotient score above 130.

SEN student enrolment in Inclusive Education Programmes at schools has increased, along with their employability rate, which is now the highest it has been since 2019.

“The ministry is dedicated to ensuring that no student is marginalised, regardless of their background,” he stated, noting that the educational disparities between genders and socioeconomic statuses have been effectively reduced.

The blueprint has also led to significant improvements in the school attendance rate and the transition rate of students from Year Six to Form One for Orang Asli and indigenous students.

“The focus is now on improving the quality of education for the Orang Asli and indigenous communities, where the achievement of minimum proficiency levels, especially in Mathematics, has also increased,” he added.

Elevating teachers

Teachers are crucial to ensuring continuous quality education.

Hence, Azman mentioned that the ministry’s primary focus is on improving teacher professionalism and skills, enhancing practices and culture in specific fields, as well as ensuring the quality and standards of educational institutions.

This includes enhancing the skills and proficiency of Bahasa Melayu and English Language teachers in delivering effective teaching and learning (PdP) to ensure students’ aspirations for bilingual proficiency, as listed in the blueprint, are achieved.

At the preschool level, the focus has been on ensuring preschool teachers hold a Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DPAKK).

While the diploma is important, the ministry is also actively working to get all private preschools registered with them to ensure the quality and standard of these institutions.

Literacy and numeracy

When it comes to literacy and numeracy, Azman said findings from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) have been one of the measurement tools used as guides in formulating strategies to improve various intervention programmes.

These include revising the national curriculum by incorporating the PISA and TIMSS assessment frameworks to align with international quality standards, improving students' reading literacy, emphasising higher-order thinking skills in PdP, enhancing the design of national and classroom assessments, as well as professional development for teachers, and strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.

"Additionally, participation in international assessments provides comparable data to evaluate the quality of national education," he said, adding that the literacy and numeracy of students have improved, with a decreasing number of schools in the low literacy and numeracy category.

Language and digital mastery

The ministry also provides opportunities for students who wish to master other languages through additional language initiatives, with strategic collaborations established with the governments of Japan, France, Korea and Germany to provide exposure to these languages.

Equally important as languages is digital savviness; for this, the ministry, through the blueprint's initiatives, has introduced the Digital Education Policy to ensure students are able to use digital technology in an integrated, creative, innovative, responsible and ethical manner.

"The increasing trend of parental, community and private sector involvement in education shows that education is a key agenda in the progress of a country," said

Azman, referencing the active involvement and collaboration of parents, community and private parties with the ministry.

Unity and character

With Malaysia being a country made up of diverse cultures, the ministry recognises the importance of unity in education and has actively organised many programmes to foster unity among students and educational staff in schools, Azman said.

“Additionally, the ministry has established a Unity Committee at the ministry level to support the government’s unity agenda.

“Besides fostering unity among the multiethnic community, the ministry strives to develop the potential and character of students through education.

“The initiatives have successfully embedded community service programmes among school students as part of the curriculum,” he said, adding that there has been a decrease in the number of schools with high disciplinary problems.

Investing in facilities

Finally, in terms of efficiency, Azman said they strive to optimise spending based on programme outcomes.

For example, the ministry has successfully implemented the Centralisation of ICT Technical Services, which can resolve technical issues more effectively and smoothly within the stipulated time according to the Service Level Agreement with vendors.

“The ministry is also committed to ensuring that basic infrastructure facilities meet the established baseline standards,” he said, adding that there has been an overall increase in the number of facilities equipped at schools.

“However, facilities friendly to people with disabilities are still at a low rate of 28%, although this number has increased compared to the previous year. This is one of the gaps that need to be improved to ensure educational equity is achieved,” he said.

Ongoing interventions

While the blueprint’s achievements have been encouraging, Azman said there are still challenges that must be addressed. To do this, he said the ministry has proactively

implemented steps to ensure that intervention measures continue to be taken to address the constraints faced.

Through the Educational Reform agenda, focus is being given to six main areas: curriculum intervention, preschool, STEM, TVET, Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening the Command of the English Language, and digital education.

He also said the ministry welcomes constructive criticism and views “which will undoubtedly benefit everyone, especially in the national education system”.“Since its inception, the goal has been to ensure a more robust national education ecosystem in terms of access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency.

All the progress that has been achieved is hoped to be sustained so that more i mpressive advancements can be made in the future,” he added.

