The Star

‘More teachers to be trained’

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MORE schools in Malaysia will have the opportunity to join a teacher professional development programme to advance education for sustainable development (ESD) in Malaysia.

United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN-SDSN) Global Leadership Council member and Malaysia Chapter chair Tan Sri Sir Dr Jeffrey Cheah said the programme, which was piloted in seven schools, will be expanded to 30 more soon, involving more than 2,500 teachers nationwide.

The programme will advance Mission 4.7, a global initiative to promote transformative education for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which calls upon governments to ensure that learners acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attributes needed to achieve the SDGs.

“In Malaysia, the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation has funded the development and delivery of a capacity building programme on ESD for teachers in Malaysian national schools,” said Cheah, who is also Sunway Group founder and chairman, during the opening ceremony of the “ESD for 2030 Regional Meeting on Transforming the Futures of Education” at Sunway University on July 3.

He said many schools have already expressed interest to be part of the expansion of the programme, signalling “the keen interest among Malaysian teachers for professional development in ESD”.

During the opening ceremony, Cheah also announced that UN-SDSN Asia has been appointed by the Education Ministry to the newly-formed Committee of Strategic Partners on Education for Sustainable Development to deliver an ESD Action Plan.

“We look forward to strengthening our partnership with the ministry to ensure sustainable development forms an integral part of our education system here,” he said.

The programme is carried out with the support of the Education Ministry through its Education Policy Planning and Research Division, adapting and applying global ESD competencies and frameworks to local contexts.

During the event, Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek said the ministry has formed a network of ESD strategic partners uniting academia, civil society and the private sector.

“We are collaborating with UN-SDSN, WWF Malaysia, Green Growth Asia Foundation, Amanah Lestari Alam and experts from Sunway University, Universiti Malaya and Nottingham University Malaysia Campus to develop impactful solutions for implementing ESD in Malaysia,” she said in her speech read by Malaysian National Commission for Unesco secretary-general Fadzilah Fadzil.

She added that the ministry aims to create a strategic action plan that addresses policy, learning environments, educators’ capacity building, youth engagement and local-level action.

“We know efforts to strengthen ESD on the ground have already begun and we are determined to build upon the current momentum,” she said.

Speaking to StarEdu after the launch, Sunway University pro-vice chancellor (research and sustainability) Prof Mahendhiran S. Nair said the programme will equip teachers to get to the core of sustainable development, by incorporating civic-mindedness into every subject taught at school.

“Teachers need to be well-informed on how to design the curriculum in an innovative way to make it exciting,” he said.

Adding on, pro vice-chancellor (education) Prof Chai Lay Ching said we have to move away from thinking about the “do’s and don’ts” when it comes to sustainability.

“We have gone into how to make the change, how to improve the situation, and this ‘how’ cannot be confined to just one subject. It needs to be integrated,” she said. — **By REBECCA RAJAENDRAM**