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Mutiara Pertiwi Project a big hit with students

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Association of former Mara Junior Science College (MRSM) students, or Ansara, has carried out aid missions in Ambon, Iraq and Afghanistan.

It has joined arms with the Malaysian Medical Relief Society (Mercy Malaysia), Global Peace Malaysia and Pewaris, or Angkatan Pemuda Warisan Malaysia and participated in various charitable and social activities, one of them being last year's Global Peace Rally.

Since the first MRSM opened in Seremban in 1972, over 40,000 students have graduated from the 36 colleges nationwide.

A little-known fact about Ansara is its collaboration with composer Datuk Wah Idris and recording company Prima Muzik. The team was responsible for re-arranging and returning Negaraku to its much preferred and close-to-original slower tempo, now the national anthem's official version.

A major project undertaken with Pewaris is the Mutiara Pertiwi Project, where free tuition is provided to orphans or schoolchildren from poor families or broken homes.

Classes are given by volunteer university graduates or professionals.

The first tuition centre was set up in 2002. Following their success, a further four centres were opened. A total of about 370 students have attended the classes so far.

At a Press conference on Tuesday, Ansara president Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir announced the dates of the National Telethon for Education 2004 and expressed confidence that it would be successful.

The telethon will culminate in a day-long carnival at Dataran Merdeka on Feb 21, which will be attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The New Straits Times is the event print media partner.

Muhammad Arif Wahab Udin, 17, from Sekolah Menengah Bukit Gading, Sungai Buloh, attributed his 8As in the Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR) examinations in 2002 to the Mutiara Pertiwi Project.

"I got 3As for my trial exams and my family, including me, didn't think I would surpass that for the actual exams. I was surprised when I scored 8As," he said.

The eldest in a family of four children, Arif had attended other tuition centres before.

There were differences between them and Akademi Damai, he said.

"There were 25 students per classroom in the tuition centres I used to go to. Akademi Damai has only around 15 students per class," he said.

Arif's schoolmate, Zanaria Che Othman, 19, was another beneficiary. After attending Akademi Damai, she obtained 4As for her Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia two years ago.

"I am grateful to Ansara for giving us this opportunity. Because of the additional reference books we had access to, we gained more knowledge."