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Better overall performance in SPM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The overall performance of students in the 2002 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination improved, with more students passing the core subjects and scoring straight As.

However, results declined in Islamic Studies (recently described by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as "shallow").

A total of 86.9 per cent passed Islamic Studies last year, compared with 87.5 per cent in 2001.

The other core subjects were Bahasa Melayu, English, Moral Studies, History, Mathematics and Science.

Bahasa Melayu registered 88.1 per cent passes (2001: 88 per cent); English, 66.9 per cent (66 per cent); Moral Studies, 75.7 per cent (72.7 per cent); History, 70 per cent (69.6 per cent); Mathematics, 71.2 per cent (70 per cent); and Science, 85.6 per cent (85.2 per cent).

A total of 663 students scored 1As in all their subjects as against 489 in 2001, while 2,732 scored a combination of 1As and 2As in all their subjects compared with 2,116 the previous year.

At a Press conference at the Examination Syndicate today, Education director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat said efforts would be made to ensure students properly learn Islamic Studies and not merely memorise the subject.

"According to our results analysis, which will be distributed to all schools, some students who take Islamic Studies, when asked to describe certain basic fardu ain (compulsory obligations) practices like mandi wajib (ritual bathing), do not even know how to do so.

"So, we have to stress comprehension. For instance, when one reads a Quranic verse, one should not just memorise it but should understand what it means."

Abdul Rafie said another reason for the decline was that many students versed in Islamic knowledge chose to sit for specialised Islamic subjects and not Islamic Studies.

The number of students who scored As in Islamic Studies also declined from 18.2 per cent in 2001 to 15.5 per cent last year.

In Bahasa Melayu, the number of students who scored As was 17.7 per cent, an increase from 16.8 per cent in 2001; English declined from 7.5 per cent in 2001 to 6.7 per cent; Moral Studies increased from 8.7 per cent in 2001 to 15.8 per cent; History declined from nine per cent in 2001 to 5.7 per cent; Mathematics increased from 22.9 per cent the previous year to 25.7 per cent; and, Science increased from 6.4 per cent the previous year to 8.1 per cent.

A total of 412,577 candidates sat the exam in 2,743 centres nationwide from Nov 7 to 27 last year.

Of the 412,577 candidates, 86.3 per cent were from schools under the Education Ministry, 3.9 per cent from state government schools, 3.5 per cent from private schools, and 6.3 per cent were private candidates.

Students collected their results from their respective schools from 10am today, while private candidates were to be notified by post.

Under the SPM open certification system introduced three years ago, students would be given certificates if they passed their Bahasa Melayu, or statements if they did not.

Abdul Rafie said 355,709 students were eligible for certificates compared with only 331,995 the previous year.

"A total of 36,803 students received statements compared with 35,713 in 2001."

Abdul Rafie said 145 schools had made the roll of honour based on their grade point average and student performance.

Of these, 39 were fully residential schools, 27 national secondary religious schools, three technical schools, 40 national day schools, 21 Mara junior science colleges, eight state religious schools, six private schools and one military college.

Sekolah Alam Shah led the list of residential schools, while Maktab Rendah Sains Mara in Langkawi topped the list of Mara junior science colleges. Kolej Yayasan Saad Melaka headed the private schools and Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultanah Asma was tops among national schools.

Abdul Rafie also said the ministry would recognise the achievements of principals and teachers of schools that consistently obtained good results.

He later presented certificates of merit to the principals of 29 of the top schools.

Abdul Rafie said the Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia (STAM) 2002 results showed an overall improvement, with the number of students eligible for a certificate increasing by 10.1 percentage points to 66.2 per cent.

A total of 3,208 candidates sat the examination. Twenty-one students received an "excellent" score in all 13 subjects, compared with only five in 2001.

The overall number of students who received "excellent" grades also increased 0.4 per cent to 7.9 per cent, while all 13 subjects showed better results compared with 2001, with improvement rates between 0.1 per cent and 8.8 per cent.

Four schools - Kolej Islam Sultan Alam Shah in Klang, Selangor; Sekolah Menengah Agama Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu; Maahad Ahmadi in Gemencheh, Negri Sembilan; and, Maahad Johor in Johor Baru, Johor, were top-scorers in the STAM.

The STAM is conducted in Arabic and is an entrance examination for a first degree at Al-Azhar University in Egypt and other universities in the Middle East, as well as local universities.