Rising to the challenge

THE STEM and Artificial Intelligence (AI) intensive programme at Sri Bestari Private School Kuala Lumpur has, over the past eight years, grown into a dynamic and impactful initiative. This sustained exposure to the intricacies of Engineering, Physics, Mathematics, and advanced technologies has prepared students well for global challenges.

This was evident at the highly competitive Shanghai Regional FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) 2026, where top teams from across China and around the world participated.

As the sole representative from South-East Asia, Sri Bestari Private School Kuala Lumpur was unfazed by teams with extensive experience and resources. Instead, the students embraced the opportunity to learn, collaborate, and compete alongside some of the best in the field of robotics.

Students underwent months of intensive preparation alongside their teachers as they assembled their prototype robot and made the necessary technical adjustments. They were fully immersed in the FRC 2026 initiative, and with the support of their parents and peers, the time and sacrifices invested toward a single goal: to perform their best at FRC 2026, proved to be well worth it.

The competition was held at East China Normal University, Shanghai, from March 12 to 15. The top four teams advanced to the World FRC in the United States.

The camaraderie among the approximately 1,000 participants was remarkable, reflecting the FRC's strong emphasis on collaboration through team alliances. This environment enabled students to exchange strategies and technical expertise throughout the competition. Sri Bestari students emerged from the experience both emboldened and enriched.

According to Zaiem Syamil, the teacher in charge and STEM-AI technical instructor, "Participating in an international competition such as FRC 2026 was a memorable experience, exposing us to highly advanced technology and materials. It has significantly helped our students build confidence and develop hands-on skills."

"Without the continuous and dedicated exposure provided by our structured STEM and AI programme, from as early as five years old in preschool through to 17 years old in high school, this level of participation and our ranking of 32nd out of 50 teams would not have been possible," said principal Dr Steven Baptist.

Sri Bestari Private School Kuala Lumpur serves as the Malaysia AI Secretariat, while the China AI Secretariat is based at Sichuan University in Chengdu.

The school has been recognised as a STEM-AI Model School under CAIEGS, with ongoing efforts to further refine and showcase its programmes to countries across the Global South.

Building on this momentum and the recent success at the Shanghai FRC2026, plans are underway to organise a STEM-AI student-teacher exchange programme to Chengdu, China, later in 2026. This initiative aims to provide deeper insights into how Chinese schools are integrating technology and AI across their curricula. As Sri Bestari Private School Kuala Lumpur continues to strive toward closing the STEM-AI gap, such immersive experiences offer invaluable first-hand exposure to leading educational practices.

Sri Bestari Private School Kuala Lumpur was the sole representative at the Shanghai Regional FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) 2026.

■ For more information, call 03-6275 5888, email marketing@bestari.edu.my or visit *www.sribestari.edu.my*

Discovering your future

WHAT'S next after completing your SPM, STPM or pre-university studies? Management and Science University (MSU), among the top universities in Malaysia, Asia, and globally, provides compelling learning experiences and quality education that is both transformative and enriching, helping you realise your dreams.

Prospective students and parents are invited to explore a world of opportunities at MSU's Open Day. Designed as an immersive campus experience, the Open Day provides a comprehensive introduction to academic pathways, campus life and future career prospects.

Held regularly throughout the year, including recent sessions in 2026, the event serves as a gateway for students to discover more than 200 accredited programmes spanning diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The Open Day offers visitors a firsthand look into life at MSU. Attendees can participate in academic briefings, where faculty members present detailed insights into programme structures, entry requirements, and career outcomes.

These sessions are complemented by personalised consultations with academic counsellors, helping students identify the best-fit courses aligned with their interests and goals. Campus tours are another key highlight, allowing visitors to explore lecture halls, laboratories, libraries and student facilities.

This experience provides a realistic glimpse into daily student life and the university's learning environment. Beyond academic exploration, the Open Day also presents valuable opportunities for immediate action. Prospective students can benefit from fast-track admissions, on-the-spot offers, and exclusive scholarship opportunities.

Financial aid options, including support from internal initiatives such as Yayasan MSU, include the following schemes, such as the President's Scholarship. MSU's very own scholarship is one such scheme that has, over the years, benefited many students.

The MSU Outstanding Rewards Scholarship (MORE) is awarded to students who demonstrate strong academic achievement and come from economically challenged backgrounds. It is also offered as an incentive to well-rounded students who excel academically, perform strongly in co-curricular activities, and have represented their school or state in competitions. These initiatives reflect MSU's commitment to ensuring that students from less privileged backgrounds have the opportunity to pursue tertiary education at the university.

MSU's Open Day reflects the university's strong emphasis on industry-driven education and holistic development. Past open day events have featured participation from multiple faculties, interactive booths and entrepreneurial showcases, encouraging innovation and creativity among students.

Visitors also have the chance to engage directly with lecturers, students, and alumni, gaining authentic insights into academic life, student support services, and career readiness.

To accommodate diverse needs, MSU offers both physical and virtual Open Day experiences. Virtual sessions include live talks, interactive Q&A segments, and digital campus tours, ensuring accessibility for students who are unable to attend in person.

The MSU Open Day allows prospective students to experience the campus lifestyle and explore future career prospects.

Whether you are a school-leaver exploring your options or a working adult seeking further qualifications, the MSU Open Day is an ideal starting point.

It brings together information, guidance, and opportunity in a single, engaging experience, empowering you to make informed decisions about your academic and professional future.

With its strong global rankings and commitment to producing industry-ready graduates, Management and Science University continues to position its Open Day as more than just an event; it is the first step towards a transformative educational journey.

Steeped in a culture of research and innovation as well as social entrepreneurship, technology-driven MSU comprises the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, the Faculty of Business Management & Professional Studies, the Faculty of Information Sciences & Engineering, the International Medical School, the School of Pharmacy, the School of Education & Social Sciences, the School of Hospitality & Creative Arts, the Post Graduate Centre and the Centre for Fundamental Studies.

■ For more information, call 03-5521 6868, email enquiry@msu.edu.my or visit *www.msu.edu.my*

Funding your university journey

IN this day and age, having a university degree no longer makes you the cream of the crop, but rather it is the most basic requirement to apply for a professional job.

However, with the rising costs of education worldwide, more secondary school-leavers are finding it harder to finance their studies at their preferred universities or, in some cases, any university at all.

Tuition for a full degree at public universities can start from RM5,000 and rise to more than hundreds of thousands of ringgit at private or branch campuses. Fortunately, there are various ways Malaysian students can fund their studies.

- **Scholarships:** Good grades go a long way, especially when it comes to securing scholarships to fund your tertiary education. There are many types of scholarships one can apply for – from the government, private corporations and public and private universities. However, keep in mind that competition for scholarships is fierce, so in addition to your grades, level up on your co-curricular participation and social skills to nail that scholarship interview.
- **Loans:** If you do not qualify for a scholarship, or if your scholarship is insufficient to cover your expenses, do not worry. Malaysia's Higher Education Ministry provides a study loan scheme through the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN).

While bank study loans are also available and may offer higher loan amounts, the PTPTN loan offers lower interest rates, making it a suitable option for university students who are just starting out.

- **Financial aid:** Aside from scholarships and loans, another option for funding your university education is financial aid. Be it from the federal or state level, there are many government or non-government organisations that provide financial aid to students in need.
- **Getting a part-time job:** Some people may advise that students should fully focus on their studies instead of balancing between studies and work.

However, working part-time, especially in a relevant position may actually put you a few paces ahead of your peers who do not.

Besides the financial benefits, working part-time allows you to interact with people in the real world, and gives you more opportunities to practise interacting and working with actual customers or clients. Additionally, if you are working in the same industry as your current degree, it would certainly be easier to find a job in that field since you already have relevant experience.

- **Take some time off studies to work:** One does not have to rush into pursuing tertiary education when funds are insufficient. It is okay to take some time off from your studies to work and save up before enrolling. This gives you more time to consider the right career pathway before taking the next step. Similar to part-time work, the skills you gain while working full-time will give you a greater advantage when looking for a job after graduation.

You can plan various ways to fund your university education, but always remember that the course and university you choose are the main factors affecting your tuition fees.

It may be tempting to enrol in a prestigious private or branch university but there are also many Malaysian universities that are recognised nationally and internationally at more affordable fees. Hence, keep your budget and financial abilities in mind as you plan your education journey.