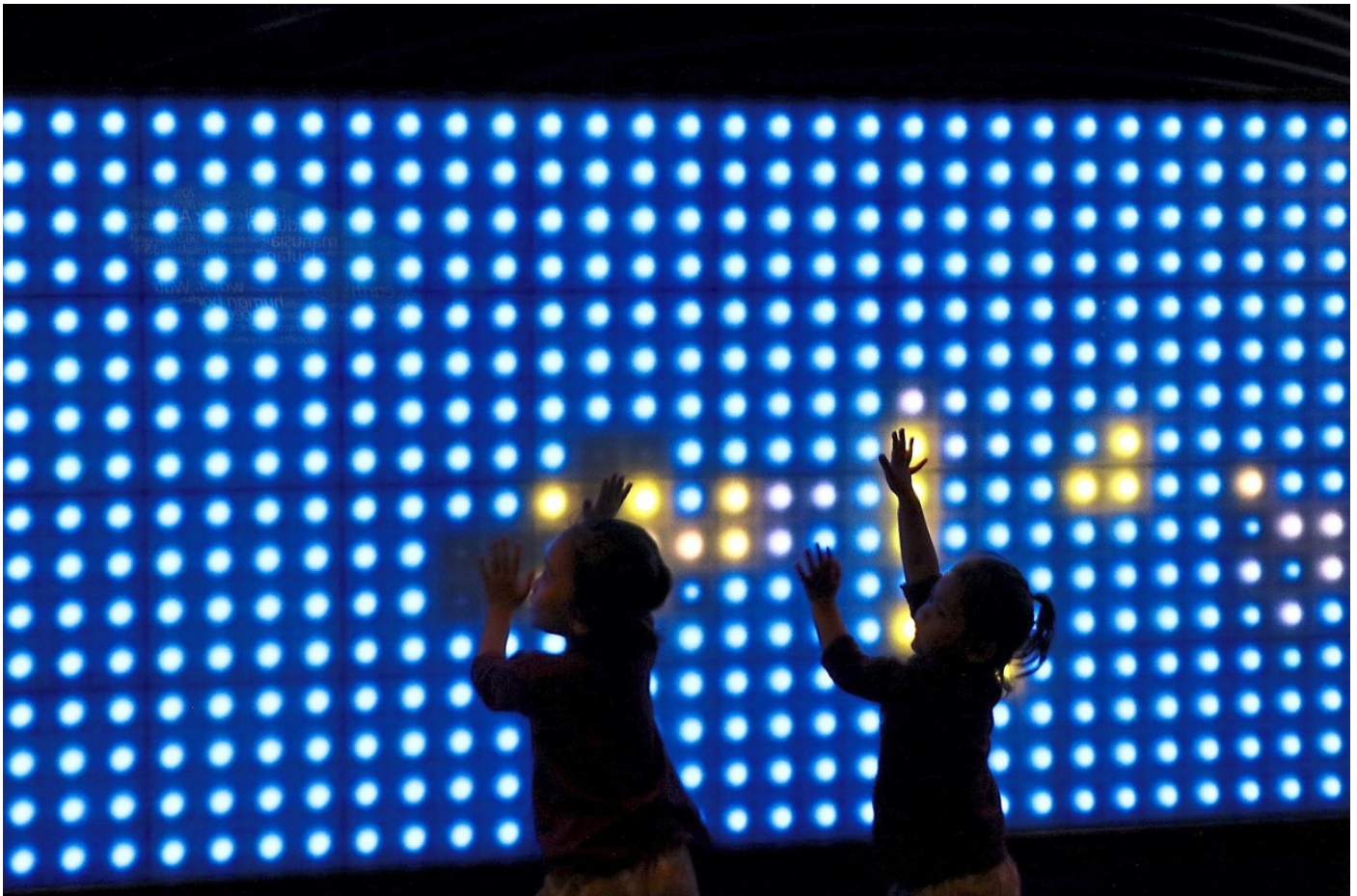


Get youths to fall in love with science



LETTERS 

Saturday, 09 Sep 2023



Seeing the beauty in science: Young visitors at the National Science Centre in Kuala Lumpur having fun while interacting with one of the displays. It is important to inculcate among youths an appreciation for science, a desire for scientific exploration and most importantly, a love for science. – FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

FOR years, Malaysians have debated whether science and mathematics should be taught in English or Bahasa Malaysia in schools.

Each medium of instruction has its own advantages and disadvantages, but that is a story for another day.

Today, we are faced with an even bigger problem – our youths are falling out of love with science.

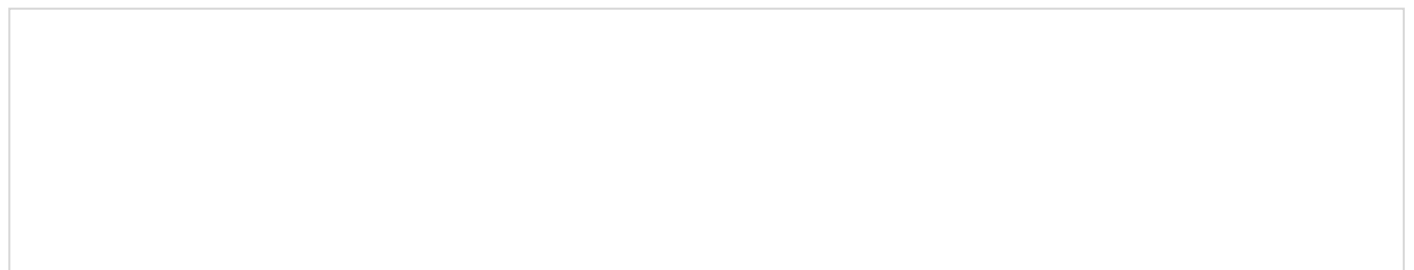
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According to a 2022 study by the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry (Mosti), interest in science among school leavers fell to just 40% compared to 66.7% just three years prior. This worrying trend is also seen in the percentage of upper secondary school students participating in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education.

Data from the Education Ministry shows that 45.2% of students chose to study STEM in 2017, but this dropped to 40.94% in 2022. This downward trend needs to be addressed urgently before it dips even further.

Mosti has announced the formation of a special committee comprising the Education Ministry, Higher Education Ministry and Human Resources Ministry to help promote science and technology among our youths.

However, I believe that in addition to promoting the importance of science to youths, we must also inculcate in them an appreciation for science, a desire for scientific exploration, and, most importantly, a love for science.



The world around us is fascinating – from the smallest of microbes viewed through a microscope to the vast expanse of space seen through a telescope, the way an embryo develops into a foetus in the womb and the way new stars are born in our solar system.

Science is not merely a subject in school or a path to a career. Science is quite literally the sum of knowledge accumulated over centuries that explains the laws of the universe and how our world works.

If our youths lose interest in science, it would be because we failed to communicate this to them.

Living organisms pass down genetic information to their offspring in the form of DNA. Computer systems communicate with each other using zeroes and ones in binary code. The chemical composition and structure of all matter can be communicated using chemical formulas.

Mathematics has a plethora of notations and symbols covering calculus, set theory and algebra.

Science is filled with so many intricate “languages” like these, and the challenge facing us now is to translate these languages to our youths and enable them to see the beauty in science.

Lecturers, researchers, teachers, and anyone involved in science should make an effort to reach out to the youths.

Gen Z (and the upcoming Gen Alpha) are extremely visual and experiential.

Seeing science take place with their own eyes and experiencing it first-hand will leave a longer-lasting impression than simply being told why science is important.

They need to be exposed to science from a young age, and that exposure must continue and get more in-depth as they get older.

As with every language, we can only go so far with theory. To become truly fluent, we must immerse ourselves and experience it regularly. The same applies to the language of science.

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