

Kedah can be 'new hub for Islamic studies'

ALOR STAR: The Sultan of Kedah hopes Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kedah (Insaniah) would become the centre for Islamic studies in Asia.

Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah said the institute, which has attracted more than 50 Southeast Asian students, including some from Thailand and Singapore, should try to attract students from other countries as well.

"Insaniah should work hard to get more students from countries like Bosnia, Russia and also China in its quest to become an internationally acclaimed centre for Islamic education," he said.

He added that by attracting foreign students, the institute would help to promote the state as a new hub for Islamic studies and perhaps to become the region's 'Al-Azhar'.

The Sultan said this in his speech after presenting diplomas and degrees to 511 graduates at Insaniah's sixth convocation here yesterday.

The 349 graduates received their diplomas in *Usuluddin*, *Syariah*, *Tahfiz Al-Quran*, Arabic Language, Business Management, Accountancy and



GOLDEN GIRL: Murni showing her Gold Medal to proud mum Normah Abdullah, 57.

Information Technology while 162 people received their degrees in *Usuluddin*, *Syariah* and Arabic Language.

Murni Johari alias Ni, 23, from Tamparuli, Sabah, received the Gold Medal for academic and overall achievement for the Bachelor programme in Islamic Studies from the Sultan.

The Silver Medal went to Shafinah Farvin Packeer Mohd from Nibong Tebal, Penang, for the diploma in management

programme and Taufik Ismail, 22, from Kampung Charuk, Sik, for the diploma in Islamic Studies programme.

Murni attributed her achievements to hard work during her four years stint at the institute.

She said she chose to study at Insaniah after her mother Normah Abdullah, 57, did not allowed her to pursue her entire study programme in Egypt.

"Through the programme here, I only need to study at Al-Azhar University for a year," she said.

One of the foreign graduates, Ali Muhamod alias Wang Yin Kang, 35, from Dali City, Yunnan, China, said he decided to study in Malaysia as it was nearer his home country.

Ali who received his Degree in *Usuluddin* said he learnt about the degree programme at the institute through a friend.

"The environment here is good and some of the cultures here are similar to those in my country, so I did not feel so lonely," he said, adding that he learnt Malay after he arrived in Terengganu more than five years ago.