

Singapore International Mathematics Challenge focuses on creativity

By Lynda Hoag, Channel NewsAsia | Posted: 21 May 2008 00:48 hrs

SINGAPORE: Organisers of Singapore's first international mathematics challenge hope to show that mathematics is not just about numbers – it is also about creative solutions.

With a few twists and turns, mathematics can be creatively applied in everyday life.

Senior Minister of State for Education, Lui Tuck Yew, said: "Here, you can refine and improve on it continuously. You can tweak your assumptions and you can come up with something different.

"And that, I think, stimulates the mind and helps them understand how interesting and how challenging mathematics is, and how relevant it is to a whole spectrum of real world issues and problems."

More than 170 students from 26 schools around the world are participating in the inaugural Singapore International Mathematics Challenge.

The students, aged 14 to 18, were given a problem to solve even before the competition started.

They had one month – starting from April 20 – to come up with what they think is the best way to cut glass into a certain shape, with minimal wastage.

Dr Hang Kim Hoo, principal of NUS High School, said: "The challenge is – across these different models – to find the best approach. This kind of problem provides opportunity for creativity.

"People tend to say that mathematics is analytical... but here we provide the context where they can look for creative solutions. Sometimes, you can get out-of-the-box solutions that even mathematicians have not thought of."

Winners will be picked based on their creativity, accuracy and efficiency when the four-day competition ends on Saturday.



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Mr Lui Tuck Yew