

'BPIEF 2016 reflects shifts in education, govt scholarships'

By **Georgette Tan**
reporters@theborneopost.com

KUCHING: The seventh Borneo Post International Education Fair (BPIEF) 2016 is here to meet the needs of parents and students, especially with the recent changes in government scholarships and the turning of scholarships into loans.

However, The Borneo Post editorial director Phyllis Wong assured the aspiring students that although they might have caught unprepared over the whole thing, it was not the end of the road for them.

"There are other scholarships and financial aid available both in the public and private sectors, and other paths, to achieve their dreams of receiving higher education," she said in her speech at the launch of the two-day fair at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCKK) yesterday, where representatives of universities, colleges, institutions of higher learning and training centres gathered to advise students and their parents on available studies and courses, as well as scholarships and financial aid.

"With the state under the leadership of Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem negotiating for the state's autonomy in education, we expect this year and the coming years to be an exciting time in the liberalisation of the education system – enabling the education system and institutions to produce future generations who can compete with globally and bring Sarawak ahead of other developed nations," she said.

This year's BPIEF sees 130 booths set up by 93 educational institutions from various disciplines – from formal

to informal education, as well as related industries.

Adding on, Phyllis said many had asked as to why hold an exhibition when everybody could easily find information on the Internet; even complete their registrations online.

"No matter how technology has advanced, the advantages of having face-to-face discussions with experts in any education fair such as this one often outweighs a faceless digital dialogue with no personal touch.

"BPIEF is organised with the full knowledge that a student should be imbued with the ability to know what to expect in an increasingly competitive world of education and learning.

"We have come a long way – from our first year of being put together by an event company, to having a dedicated team to run the show," she added.

BPIEF 2016 was declared open by Women, Welfare and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah, who also holds a watching brief over the state education.

In his speech, BPIEF chairman Dorge Rajah said in the seven years of organising and hosting the BPIEF as the newspaper's corporate social responsibility (CSR) project, they had been blessed with assistance and support from many organisations and individuals.

"As always, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the honourable Datuk Fatimah Abdullah for her valuable guidance and input, as well as the state Education Department for

its role in liaising with schools."

Dorge, who is also The Borneo Post Online head, conveyed thanks to Women and Family Department for its support, OutYouth.my and iCube Innovation for reaching out to the youths, as well as SarawakYes! and Azam for the various activities and contribution towards making BPIEF a vibrant event this year.

Moreover, Dorge also urged the students and their parents to listen to its 'Reach Out' programme, which would include motivational talks from peers, to broaden their views and help them make key life decisions.

"Speak to the counsellors at the State Education booth. PTPTN (National Higher Education Fund Corporation) and Yayasan Sarawak are also here for those needing to find out about financial assistance (for education)."

Visitors to the BPIEF would also be entertained by singer Norafizah Busman and Azam Young Souls in various stage performances on both days, while those wishing to donate blood could head to a booth run by Malaysian Red Crescent in collaboration with Sarawak General Hospital.

At the launching ceremony, winners of the Best Booth Design Awards 2015 were announced. In last year's BPIEF, University of Reading Malaysia came out tops, followed by UCSI University and Executive College as the respective first and second runner-up.

BPIEF 2016 is open from 10am to 6pm at BCKK and it ends today.

There are other scholarships and financial aid available both in the public and private sectors, and other paths, to achieve their dreams of receiving higher education.

— Phyllis Wong, The Borneo Post editorial director



(From left) Fatimah, See, Phyllis and state Women and Family Department Noriah Ahmad observe a makeup demonstration at a booth after the launch of BPIEF 2016 at BCCK.