

Helping school leavers become skilled workers

By Gerald Chung

KUCHING: The School Leavers Human Capital Development Council Secretariat, in collaboration with the State Education Department, will be launching a special programme involving all counselling teachers in Sarawak schools next month as part of its strategy to disseminate information on economic development and manpower requirements, especially with the implementation of Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE).

Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Department (Human Resource and Training), Datin Hajah Fatimah Abdullah, who is also the Assistant Minister holding a watching brief on education in Sarawak, said: "Through the programme, the council hopes to reach out to 60% of the students who cannot continue with formal education by giving them guidance and information on the courses available and encouraging them to enrol at skills training centres in the state."

She said that the council wanted to see more students in Sarawak further their studies.

"The state has a small population base and the manpower needs of SCORE are big, especially in terms of trained workers. The council sees that there is a need to maximise the human capital potential of the 60% school leavers who discontinue with formal education each year."

According to Fatimah, there are two main factors which stop students from furthering their studies. One is the lack of information on the opportunities available to them and the other is financial problems.

"It is also hoped that through the programme, which involves the counselling teachers in schools in the state, the students will also be provided with information on the financial facilities available to them, including those provided by Sarawak Foundation and MARA," she said, adding that such

information was also made available through road shows and education and training expos.

Fatimah said that with the collaboration of the eight National Service (NS) training camps here through the Community Service Module, the council was providing information and guidance along with counselling on the options open to those who could not continue with formal education.

The Assistant Minister pointed out that Sarawak was home to 1,262 primary schools and 177 secondary schools which offered basic education from Primary One to Form Five.

"Various forms of assistance are given - from boarding facilities to food assistance and textbooks and scholarships. There are also six local institutions of higher learning and 97 skill training institutes.

"As I travel to rural Sarawak, I still come across some students who quit schooling after Form Five and Form Six despite the numerous opportunities and financial assistance made available by the government and private sector for further education and skills training," she said.

Fatimah explained that the formation of the School Leavers Human Capital Development Council Secretariat was approved by the State Cabinet on March 24, 2005.

The secretariat organises the Training and Education Opportunity Programme, an outreach programme for school leavers who are attending National Service programme in all the eight NS camps in Sarawak.

The state is the only one to offer the programme through the Community Service Module.

Fatimah added that since its pilot project in 2005, the council had been able to reach out to no less than 33,000 school leavers.

"It is determined to reach out to more in the future, especially with the implementation of the programme with the counselling teachers," she said.



Datin Hajah Fatimah Abdullah (second left) and Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Department (Economic Planning) Larry Sng (centre) visiting the laboratory at UCSI's new premises. PHOTO: TH LU

