

Tajuk : Radio Bario keeps rural residents up to date

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Tengku Muhammad Ismail (third from left) together with several others from Wellington College, the United Kingdom, speaking to Radio Bario during a recent visit to the highlands. Pic by Dennis Wong

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DENNIS WONG

BARIO: There are mostly silver-haired or the very young living in this highland settlement, but that does not mean they are technologically illiterate.

Despite being more than 500km deep in the highlands of Sarawak, they are the first rural settlement to run their own community radio.

Radio Bario 94.0FM hit the airwaves last year and since then, the station is fully run by the locals.

Station manager Stanley Isaac said the station serves not only as an entertainment provider but also as a news tool for the eight villages here and other nearby settlements near the highlands.

"We gather current news from the Internet and translate it into Kelabit," the former school teacher told the *New Straits Times*.

Newspapers rarely reach the highlands due to its distance and the locals here said when they get a copy, it is normally a few weeks old or even several months old.

He recently interviewed students from Wellington College, the United Kingdom, who were here on a project.

The students included Terengganu crown prince Tengku Muhammad Ismail, Georgina Jolly Wright, Andrea Auerbach, Sebastian Richard Benson Maxwell, Sean Ryan Morrisroe and tutor Dr Adam Kazmi.

"Once in a while we get important visitors and we get them to talk in our show."

Radio Bario can only be heard within the area. It airs between 6am and 10am, spinning Kelabit, Malay, English and even Indian songs.

The radio service is part of the result of the successful eBario project by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Unimas Centre of Excellence for Renewable Energy head Associate Professor Al Khalid Othman said the eBario project has helped the community in many ways from agriculture, tourism and even technology.

"Bario was not that well known outside Sarawak when we first started. We also had difficulties in bringing the idea to the community. But the community have learned to adapt and to utilise the skills they have learned to make their home a better place."

Radio Bario exists with the collaboration between the community and UK Based RadioActive Ltd, which has helped to bring radio technology to more than 50 rural areas around the world.

Unimas has also expanded similar programmes to Ba'Kelalan, Long Lamai and also Pulau Laram and Buayan in Sabah.