



WELL DONE SON ... Ezra being congratulated by his father and mother after the convocation ceremony yesterday. Looking on is his niece.

Penan graduate hopes to be an educationist

SAMARAHAN: With that long ponytail hanging out of his graduation robe yesterday, it was clear that Ezra Uda, who graduated with a degree in politics and administration, was trying to make a statement.

"I hope that more Penan will reach my level and be even better than me," said Ezra, 25, who is believed to be only the second Penan to have graduated from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Speaking to reporters after his convocation and some personal words of encouragement from Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, the Penan lad said that his mission in life was to build a bridge between him and his community.

Hoping to achieve this by being an educationist, Ezra said that his wish was to see his community at par with the level of development achieved by other races in the State.

"I think the biggest setback for the Penan community is education.

"Education is very important. With education we can change our lives," said the second eldest in a family of five.

Ezra, who hails from Long Lamai and was a student of SMK Marudi in Baram, had worked as a temporary teacher before pursuing his education in Unimas, thanks in part, he said, to the financial assistance provided by the government.

Ezra's parents, Uda Limau, 56, and Ganet Nyato, 52, are farmers. The beaming parents were present at their son's graduation yesterday and they had brought with them their grandchild.

Yesterday, 461 students received their scrolls from Taib.

The graduates were from the Social Science Faculty, Applied Arts and Creative Faculty and Science and Technology Resource Faculty.

In the two-day convocation ceremony, some 977 students had graduated, including 83 post graduates.

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Better facilities expected

The first day of convocation was officiated by Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Datuk Patinggi Abang Muhammad Salahuddin, who is also the Unimas Chancellor.

Out of the 894 graduates, 528 of them were women.

Unimas Vice Chancellor Prof Datuk Yusuf Hadi said in his speech that Unimas, which was celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, was looking forward to greater achievements in the years ahead.

He said that with the completion of some sections of its permanent campus next year, staff and students could expect better facilities for teaching and learning, research and recreation.

He pointed out that the Science and Technology Faculty, Computer Science and Information Technology Faculty and the Engineering Faculty would all be completed next year.

Yusuf also revealed that some new programmes were being planned and that there was a likelihood that a Degree in Education programme in Science, Mathematics and Information Technology would be introduced next year.