



LAUNCHING: Taib launching STEMfest 2013, witnessed by Ragad left, Goncalves (right) and other guests. — Photo by Tan Song Wei

Taib: STEM way to score 340,000 jobs

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KOTASAMARAHAN: Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy needs about 343,000 professional and skilled workers by 2030, but the state is producing only about 9,000 to 10,000 such workers annually at present.

Hence, the state must intensify efforts to produce more skilled workers to meet the anticipated demand, said Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud yesterday.

The yearly coming online of 9,000 to 10,000 skilled workers are churned out by 76 institutions in the state, he said at the launching of the 'International Festival of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics' (STEMfest) at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday.

The chief minister said emphasis ought to be on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education in order to produce skilled workers, especially those from rural areas.

"Generally, our rural youths have shown natural abilities to work with machines and have gained international recognition for being credible. They are also known to be focused and disciplined workers.

"Unfortunately, those from the rural areas tend to be quite shy of STEM subjects as their perception is that the subjects are extremely complicated and difficult. But they have to master it in order to get even the lower end of training as industrial workers."

In view of this, he said rural folks had to be made aware of the benefits of STEM education, the state's industrialisation programmes and the expanding opportunities in technical jobs which would give them good earning power in the future.

"STEM education can be made easier through more up-to-date teaching methods and aids to open up the eyes of rural youths with potential to become technical workers.

"Basically, STEM or technical education must be highlighted and the practical nature of training must be emphasised so that we would be able to hasten the pace of our recruitment of rural youths."

On STEMfest, Taib expressed optimism that its six conferences such as World Science, Technology and Education Conference; World Hybrid Technologies and Energy Conference; World Safety on Science, Industry and Education, International Conference on Transnational Collaboration in STEM Education; Forest Science Education Special Session; and Borneo International Investment Conference would open the eyes of teachers about STEM.

"This conference brings a good array of STEM speakers,



ROBOTIC PROTOTYPE: Taib and Ragad taking a closer look at a prototype mechanical robot on display at Murdoch University's booth at STEMfest. Also in the photo is STEMfest exhibitor Dr Nick Thompson of Murdoch University, Australia. — Photo by Chimon Upon

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Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, Chief Minister

professors as well as exhibitors from an iPad application software organisation, higher learning institutions among others and their presence should be utilised by students, business leaders, and the public."

The one-week STEMfest has attracted more than 250 delegates from more than 40 countries. It is hosted by Unimas in collaboration with Tabung Ekonomi Gagasan Anak Bumiputra Sarawak (Tegas) and the State Education Department.

Also present at the launch were Taib's wife Puan Sri

Ragad Kurdi Taib, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu, Minister of Infrastructure Development and Communications Dato Sri Michael Manyin Jawong, Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Department (Promotion of Technical Education) Datu Len Talif Salleh, Assistant Minister of Industrial Estate Development Datuk Peter Nansian, Global STEM States Incorporated executive director David Goncalves and Unimas vice chancellor Prof Dato Dr Mohamad Kadim Suaidi.



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