

Aim to be first class community

Effendi recommends thinking out of the box in order to be globally competitive

By Wilson Luke

KOTA SAMARAHAN: Malaysians must think 'out-of-the-box' and aim to be a first class community to compete in a global economy.

"To do this, let us learn from the best practices adopted by others," said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Dato Sri Effendi Norwawi during a meeting with about 1,500 Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) students yesterday.

He said it was essential to think 'out-of-the-box' and be flexible in one's outlook in order to be more attuned to the fast evolving needs of a globally competitive environment.

Effendi also advised the freshmen to seize the opportunity not only to excel in academic pursuit but also to channel their energies towards a more participative role through forums and activities offered by the university.

"This will produce more 'all-rounded' graduates who will be better prepared to face the challenges of the outside world when they graduate," he said.

He added that although Malaysian graduates had excelled in academic affairs, they need to have a global outlook and master their communication skills so that they could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their international counterparts.

The minister also urged the students to take an active interest in current issues affecting international relations instead of just concentrating on their studies.

On the issue of unemployed graduates, Effendi stressed the importance of acquiring the necessary job skills as one way to gain employment.

He advised students to be open-minded when seeking employment as he understood their desire to find an ideal job after graduation.

"They must be willing to learn new or additional skills that will make them more all-rounded professionals," he said.

Effendi said graduates should not be too choosy as it is vital to gain these multi-faceted experiences before they branched off to other vocations in life.

"The reality is that employers prefer to hire workers who are multi-tasked and adaptable to the changing environment apart from those with strong academic qualifications," he said.

Another factor which would enable local graduates to be more marketable in the workforce was the mastery of good communications skills and language proficiency, he said.

He said that as English is the language for worldwide business transactions, Malaysians have no choice but to master it in order to be competitive.

He cited China which has emerged as a major economic force, and said Malaysians should also seek to learn other international languages such as Mandarin, which even the Japanese are flocking to learn.

"Lifelong education is another issue which the government is actively promoting under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) that will serve local graduates well as their professional opportunities evolve," said Effendi.

The minister said the government was aware that some graduates had difficulties in looking for jobs due to mismatch between their academic specialties and the actual job market requirements.

"Under such instances, some may pursue additional professional courses while they work," he said, advising the graduates not to be disheartened by their first degrees as they would find success by mastering several fields.

According to Effendi, that was the reason the government had placed emphasis on continuing education and would intensify efforts to encourage this concept.

He also advised the undergraduates to practise tolerance and be proud of the country's diversity.

Expressing his concern about racial polarisation in today's society, Effendi urged the freshmen to take advantage of the conducive environment provided by the university to work closely with each other to promote greater integration and interaction among the various ethnic groups.

"I hope you will all learn to appreciate the beauty and richness of our racial diversity," he said. He added that "skin colour is only the outer cover of a person. There is only one race in this world, and that is the human race."

Earlier, Effendi briefed the students on the 9MP, and the strategies and actions taken by the government to ensure the success of its implementation.

The Unimas meeting is a regular series of gatherings where the freshmen will get the opportunity to meet with government leaders to be briefed on policies and programmes embarked by the government.

The students will also provide feedback to the government besides obtaining information on government policies and current issues affecting the country.

Also present at the session were Unimas board of directors' chairman Tan Sri Datuk Amar Bujang Mohd Nor and Unimas vice-chancellor Dr Abdul Rashid Abdullah.



LEADER MEETING STUDENTS: Effendi (centre) greeting Unimas freshmen while being accompanied by Bujang Nor (blue batik) and Abdul Rashid (right).

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