

Promote skills training among rural youths, says Taib

KOTA SAMARAHAN: Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said one of the factors why some rural youths were shying away from skills training programmes and courses was because they thought they had to be good in science and maths.

Speaking during the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education (STEM) Festival , or STEMfest, at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday, he said skills training only required them to be good with their hands.

He said because of their wrong perception, many rural youths were missing out on jobs and higher income opportunities. Taib said the perception was because of the way students were taught in school since the early days of the old colonial education system.

"We were among those people who followed very religiously the old system that we inherit from the colonial days. We hope this would change to the system in use in Germany and Australia.

Taib hoped that through STEMfest, teachers and educators would be able to share ideas and get insight on how to better publicise skills and technical training to the rural youths to make these more appealing rather than scaring them away.



Light moment: Taib and Ragad chatting with participants before the launch of STEMfest at DeTAR Putra, Unimas in Kota Samarahan. – ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE / The Star

He said STEM was critical to economic growth and for industries to expand.

"The development of Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE) would need some 343,000 professionals and skilled workers by the year 2030. Now we are producing between 9,000 and 10,000 from 76 training institutions in the state. It is clear that we need to step up the supply of skilled workers to meet the expected demand.

"Initially we recovered from our shortfall with foreign workers. We need more liberal immigration policies to allow foreigners to work in our midst. This is what we are prepared to do.

"At the same time we want to increase the enrolment in existing institutions and open up many more institutions especially in rural and semi-urban areas like Betong, Kapit, Kanowit, Serian, Mukah and Lawas," said Taib.