

Developing local ICT talent

ZULITA MUSTAFA
zulita@nst.com.my

SEVEN video submissions, including a two-minute video introducing themselves and explaining their motivation to participate in the 'Seeds for the Future' programme, and a face-to-face interview, were what it took for 10 students to win a two-week trip to China.

Out of 30 students who were picked based on their video content, these 10 lucky electronic engineering and computer science undergraduates from various universities in the country were chosen to participate in a fully sponsored trip by Huawei Malaysia.

This trip will provide them the opportunity of a cultural and comprehensive first-hand working experience in Beijing and Huawei's headquarters in Shenzhen.

At the flag-off ceremony at the Education Ministry recently, Huawei Malaysia chief executive officer Baker Zhou said: "The programme will offer language training, exposure to Chinese culture and, most importantly, expose students to Huawei's dynamic global business environment in China."

Entering its fifth year in Malaysia, the programme seeks to develop local information and communications technology (ICT) talent, boost knowledge transfer, encourage a greater understanding of the ICT sector and promote participation in the regional digital community.

The flag-off ceremony was officiated by Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik.

In his speech, he said, universities needed to work harder to develop not just employable graduates, but graduates who could compete and thrive in this borderless world.

"Now, more than ever, our students need to be prepared to face the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Programmes such as 'Seeds for the Future' are part of the many collaborations we want universities to be a part of," he said.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah third-year undergraduate in Business Computing Anusha Thanapalan hoped the trip would not only be a great learning experience, but also so much more than that.

"I will make the most of my journey and just have fun, talk to people, build network and discover the culture."

"I heard a lot about the Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China, and can't wait to explore those beautiful places as well," she said.

Anusha, who was ecstatic to be selected for the trip, described the challenges she had to go through as tough and an eye-opening.

"We had to submit seven videos depicting Huawei as a brand, and a presentation about ourselves. It sure was a challenging task as I have never made a video on my own."

"But it was all worth it for a trip to learn about Huawei's latest ICT, 5G, cloud computing and artificial intelligence. I look forward to the cultural exchange, the Mandarin classes and, perhaps, calligraphy lessons too," she said.

As a technology enthusiast, Muhammad



Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik symbolically flagging-off the 'Seeds for the Future' participants at his ministry in Putrajaya.

Nor Iman Abdul Manan from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia is looking forward to seeing the main technologies developed by Huawei, from mobile technologies to cloud computing.

He said it was very much related to his course and hoped to become an engineer in the company someday.

"I am eager to take the Chinese lessons and hope it will be useful to me one day," he said.

Nor Iman, who is studying engineering, said the trip would allow him to learn more about ICT and acquire first-hand knowledge in the industry.

Luciana Wong Ai Hua, an electronic engineering undergraduate at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, said besides acquiring language skills, she could not wait to discover a new culture and learn about new technologies.

"I will use my time there to experience the amazing gastronomy, language and culture, while at the same time, understand and learn what goes on behind the scenes at one of the greatest companies in the world."

Wong said her confidence had grown since she started the competition, adding that she hoped to be able to continue learning about telecommunication and ICT.

"Not only have I gained many friends from this competition, I also had the chance to look deeper into what I can do once I graduate."

"I am lucky to have this 'glimpse into the future' and I will not waste the opportunity," she said.

The other seven participants are Saw Jay Han (University of Malaya), Mohamad Hafizul Ikhwan Ridzuan (Multimedia University), Lim Yii Vonne (Unimas), Wan Nur Atiqah Wan Ah-

mad Yusri (Universiti Putra Malaysia), Kong En Yie (Unimas), Teo Yar Lee (MMU), and Chin Xi-ang Yi (Universiti Teknologi Petronas).

Over two weeks, these students will learn about trends in cloud computing, Internet of Things, 5G technologies, building and configuring their own 4G base stations and many other cutting-edge solutions through technology workshops and networking events.

The programme also includes cultural aspects, such as Mandarin calligraphy and painting classes. The students will also get to explore the cities through day tours.

The students are scheduled to depart on Oct 12 and return to Malaysia on Oct 27.

As a contributor to the ICT industry, Huawei trains 20,000 engineers annually at its global training centre in Cyberjaya.

Maszlee said the ministry was working with Huawei Malaysia and other companies through the CEO@Faculty 2.0 Programme, where young university lecturers spend six months under the mentorship of industry leaders, such as Zhou.

"This year, two lecturers — Dr Nurhidayat-ullaili Muhd Julkapli from UM and Dr Shankar Karuppayah from Universiti Sains Malaysia — have been selected to work with Huawei Malaysia."

"We need more companies to work with our universities, and in return, the universities must embrace industries to develop cutting-edge research and build a workforce with an international perspective."

Zhou said he believed basic research and education were the foundation for creating and revitalising industry.

"Huawei has been and always will be a strong supporter in developing local ICT through education, knowledge-transfer and industry-academia collaborations. Hopefully, this programme will boost their employability skills and enable them to be prepared for the future."



Muhammad Nor Iman



Luciana Wong Ai Hua



“ We had to submit seven videos depicting Huawei as a brand, and a presentation about ourselves. It sure was a challenging task as I have never made a video on my own. ”

ANUSHA THANAPALAN
Business Computing student
Universiti Malaysia Sabah