

Chance for all M'sians to learn English

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KOTA KINABALU: Bahasa Inggeris 1Malaysia (BI1M) is back again this year, offering communities a chance to gain English language skills while at the same time creating an employment opportunity for retired teachers and fresh graduates. Rolled out by the Ministry of Finance, BI1M is a programme that provides English training to all Malaysians nationwide, regardless of age, gender and ethnicity for free.

It is an initiative under the National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS), implemented by the MOF in partnership with humanitarian organisation SOLS 24/7. Classes will be held at 15 locations nationwide, including in Sabah, and the aim is to improve the standard of English in the country by teaching communicative English to Malaysians in urban and rural areas.

The programme was said to have far surpassed expectations last year with more than 8,000 students graduating after 5 months of training. It also provided an amazing employment opportunity for two opposite scales of the job market – the retirees and fresh graduates.

Retired government teachers were hired as English teachers under the BI1M teaching team that had a wealth of experience while fresh local graduates, who wanted work opportunities to build their resumes, were employed side-by-side with the retirees as local facilitators.

BI1M became a platform for Malaysians to work on a nationwide initiative by the MOF Ministry that not only provided them with employment for five months, but also gave back to the community through teaching English and carrying out community development activities.

Just like last year, individuals who join the BI1M programme will benefit from an experienced trainer, technology savvy youth and international facilitators who brings a slice of the international world to the "kampung."

Retirees who successfully complete the BI1M training and programme will have the opportunity to access and use the SOLS 24/7 training material as well as online monitoring and evaluation system to start their own tuition or businesses under a two-year renewable licence.

Fresh graduates will not only get a certificate from the government but have employment opportunities available after the programme ends.

The government regards English as important because citizens go through 11 years of English classes in school.

But most only understand English at a basic level. The primary difficulty is not in understanding English but in speaking English.

Language anxiety, the lack of practice and the fear of failure all contribute to a barrier that prevents Malaysians, including Sabahans, from speaking the language.

Reading, writing and listening is important, but the focus and the aim of BI1M is to do anything to help them speak the language fluently, confidently and correctly.

It is also a proven fact that English is a global business language, a professional requirement of many occupations and it makes up 52 per cent of all internet content.

BI1M classes are offered for children, youth, small business owners, housewives and retirees.

Employment opportunities are offered to retired local teachers or retirees (as English trainers), fresh local graduates preferably those who graduated between 2015-2017 (as local facilitators), Malaysian graduate of any age (as centre administrators), non-Malaysian graduate (as international facilitators) and current Malaysian and international students (as interns).

The programme will start in June until November 1 this year.

Retirees and graduates who are interested to teach will undergo a one-week training in Kuala Lumpur after which they will be placed at the training centres on June 6. More information can be obtained at <http://www.bi1m.my/> - Leonard Alaza

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