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KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) – “Eng Hawk’ (I love) empowerNCER Academic @ Perak program. The teachers are Orang Asli and that has made the learning process easier for me and my friends,” said a 5th year student from Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Batu 7 in Batang Padang, Perak, Nazira a / p Noli.

Nazira is among 900 Orang Asli students from remote areas of the state selected to participate in the empowerNCER Academic @ Perak program to improve their academic and personal development skills, following the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NCER Academic @ Perak (Orang Asli) program is a human resources development Initiative within the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) in collaboration with University Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) and the Orang Asli Development Department (JAKOA).



Some of the empowerNCER Academic @ Perak program participants who also benefited from the empowerNCER MyKasih program.

The program is designed to improve academic achievement and school attendance among Orang Asli students as they move to the next stage of Year 6 and Intermediate through effective learning modules prepared by UPSI lecturers and education professionals, with an emphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic skills (3M).

COOPERATION WITH MYKASIH

At the same time, NCIA is working with the MyKasih Foundation (MyKasih) to provide Orang Asli students in remote rural areas with access to the latest teaching aids and facilities, as well as food aid.

The program complements academic training that focuses on aspects of health and personal development. Participants are 5th and 6th year from SK Pos Kemar in Hulu Perak; SK Batu 14 and SK Batu 7 in Batang Padang; as well as SK Pos Legap and SK Pos Perwor in Kuala Kangsar, mostly from different Orang Asli ethnic groups such as Murut, Semai and Temiar.



Norfazlyna a / p Shaari with some of Orang Asli’s students during the teaching and learning process in the empowerNCER Academic @ Perak program.

Fully funded by the MyKasih Foundation, the program is divided into four main components, namely, cashless student food aid; 21st Century Classroom for further improvements in 3M; Robotic Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Learning to create awareness in STEM and other learning applications; and the Aquaponic Garden Initiative to encourage students to sell their products.

The program has shown a positive impact on improving the school attendance of students participating in the school and has stimulated their interest in STEM.

EDUCATION KEYS FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

NCIA Executive Director Datuk Seri Jebasingam Issace John said education is key to lifting the poor out of poverty, noting that NCIA’s partnership with MyKasih through the program is aimed at helping the Orang Asli community.

He said that before the start of the COVID-19 UPSI pandemic, teachers were mobilized in Orang Asli settlements to conduct learning activities related to 3M skills.

“However, as a result of school closures and measures taken to stop the spread of coronavirus, UPSI has appointed 31 Orang Asli facilitators to conduct teaching and learning programs in their villages.

“These facilitators are students of Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) who are equipped with teaching modules with UPSI. Lessons have continued despite the pandemic to ensure they can enjoy a better life in the future.



Some of the participants in the Virtual National Robotics Competition 2021.

The facilitator, Norfazlyna a / p Shaari, who was proud to have contributed to Orang Asli, said the program provided her with a rich experience to realize her ambition to become a teacher.

Meanwhile, Jebasingam said UPSI is also working with participants in school canteens to provide food and drink for students and leaders.

“Previously, student beneficiaries were given monthly non-cash scholarships worth RM60 through their student smart card linked to MyKad for the purchase of food and beverages in the school canteen.

“As the schools were closed during the Movement Control Order (MCO), UPSI used the monthly allocations via the smart card for nutrition arrangements with the school canteen for students and leaders.

“We have fully optimized the content provided by MyKasih. In addition to providing food for students, MyKasih also contributed food baskets for Orang Asli children in five participating schools,” he said, adding that each food basket is worth 150 RM, consisting of basic items such as rice, flour, sugar, etc. 1,600 students to ease the burden on their families during a pandemic.

LAPTOPS FOR STUDENTS

According to Jebasingam, nearly 400 laptops, projectors and printers were delivered last year to 19 Orang Asli schools and placed in the computer labs of the respective schools.



The MyKasih Foundation (MyKasih) also contributed food baskets to the children of Orang Asli.

“With the new laptops, we hope that Orang Asli children will be attracted to take advantage of the limitless learning opportunities available to them. This is also one of the approaches that will encourage them to attend school, allowing them to use the latest digital technologies in the globalization era,” he said.

Due to the implementation of OKZ and the closure of the schools, MyKasih has enabled facilitators appointed by UPSI to use facilities for the teaching and learning process in their villages.

“With these facilities, we hope to stimulate students’ interest in learning to ensure that they are not left out of the national transformation program, in line with the Malaysian family concept and Malaysia’s 12th plan (12MP),” he said.

The government has assured that no ethnic group will be left out in Malaysia’s goal of achieving a high-income economy, he added.

MyKasih, among other things, provides teaching and learning materials to prepare students for the Virtual National Robotics Competition 2021, which was held for a week from 24.

“A total of 74 students participated in the competition under the empowerNCER MyKasih program including 10 Orang Asli children from five schools. That allows them to gain new experiences, as well as to stimulate interest in robotics,” he said.

The MyKasih Foundation (MyKasih) also contributed food baskets to the children of Orang Asli.

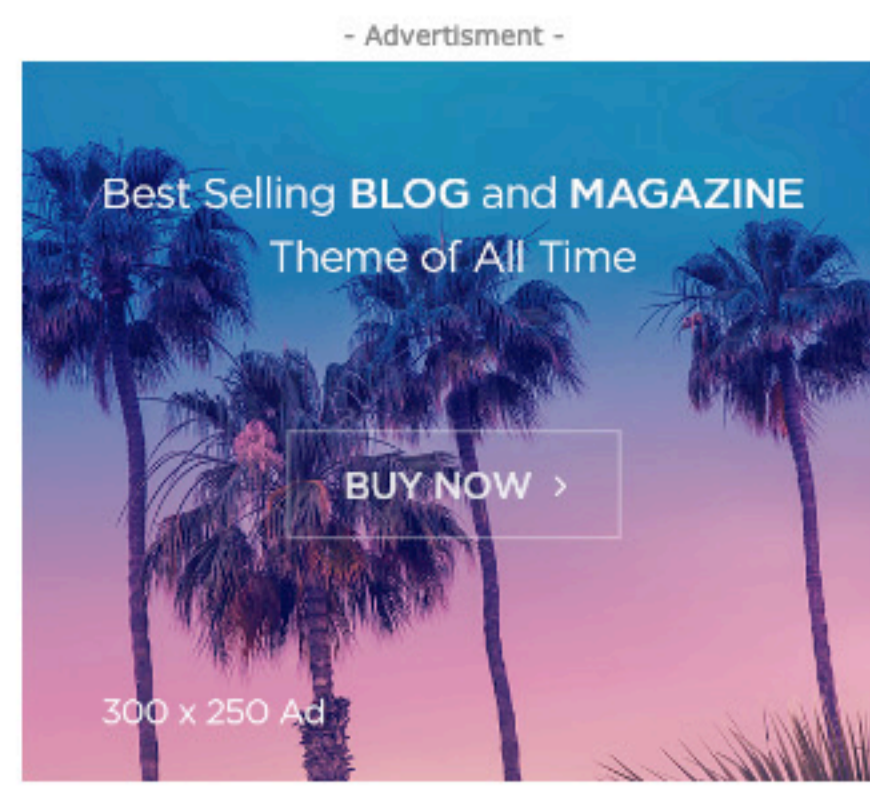
Meanwhile, in the same competition, Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Langkawi, who was also included in the empowerNCER MyKasih program, was selected for the 2021 World Robot Virtual Games Championship (RVG) next month.

Jebasingam said synergies between MyKasih, NCIA, UPSI and JAKOA are vital to helping poor students get a quality education and provide a better life for their families.

“We hope that other organizations, especially the private sector, will participate in similar programs in order to increase the participation of students in the future.” This is in line with the aspirations of 12 MPs to eradicate poverty and develop inclusive communities, including the Orang Asli community,” he said.

Translated by Salbiah Said

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