

Sabah Pan-Borneo great platform for local engineers

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SIPITANG: For a group of Sabah-born young technical engineers, the state's Pan-Borneo Highway project was the take-off point of their career.

The 706-kilometre long highway is part of the bigger Pan Borneo Highway, which also runs through Sarawak, Brunei and the Kalimantan region in Indonesia.

The construction of the Sabah portion of the highway costs some RM12.08 billion but will provide much better roads and accessibility throughout Sabah, in addition to providing a platform to train and hone the skills of talented local engineers.

Over 200 technical engineers are involved in the project. This includes 117 Sabah-born young engineers, 39 of whom are females.

Phase one of the highway comprises 35 packages, 12 of which have already started. The rest will be completed in stages, with the entire project expected to be completed by 2021.

PRICELESS EXPERIENCE

One the young engineers on the project is 27-year-old Diana Sela Augustine from Sandakan. The graduate of civil engineering from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) had not expected to get the chance to be involved in a mega project like the Pan Borneo Highway so early on in her career.

"To get an opportunity and experience like this, I would have to go outside of Sabah. However, the Pan Borneo Highway project has allowed me such an opportunity in my own state," she said.

Diana is handling package three, which is the upgrading of the 22.4km road between Beaufort and Bongawan.

Nelissa Christy, 26, is also grateful to be part of the project as it allowed her to employ her knowledge and skills as an engineer, in addition to gaining valuable experience.

The Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah civil engineering graduate reviews project drawings, taking into account every point of view and assessment to enable accurate decisions to be made.

"I am also responsible for handling matters involving other quarters related to water and electrical supplies as well as for handling complaints of villagers (whose land is involved in the project)," said Nelissa, who hails from Penampang.

TRAINING YOUNG TALENT

Meanwhile, 27-year-old Syazreena Parno had no idea that a degree in geological sciences could land her a spot in the mega project.

The UMS graduate from Labuan was employed by the project co-ordinator, Borneo Highway PDP Sdn Bhd (BHP), after she completed a training scheme with them between May and November last year.

She is now involved in the construction of package one and two of the Sabah Pan Borneo Highway, a 31km stretch between Sindumin and Beaufort.

BHP Regional Project Manager Kamarulzaman Ahmad said he was confident in the abilities of the young engineers to realise the project.

"Every construction package of the Sabah Pan Borneo Highway involves a group of engineers com-

prising younger talents as well as the more experienced ones.

"We find this a great way to train the young talents," he told Bernama.

He said the young engineers showed great commitment to the project despite the difficulty of the task at hand, which required the expertise of engineers with at least 10 years of experience.

However, he said, their lack of experience was not a hindrance to performing well on the project as the younger engineers were equipped with the skills necessary to complete their respective tasks.

OLD APPROACH NO LONGER SUITABLE

Kamarulzaman, 50, has more than 20 years of skills and experience as an engineer and uses his expertise to train the younger engineers.

He took on the offer to handle the project in May and saw the training of the team of young engineers to handle the billion ringgit project as one of the major tasks.

"I hope these young engineers will

strengthen our team and understand the hierarchy, responsibility and discipline required for the job. Alhamdulillah (praise be to God), they have, so far, given me their best.

"They understand each task given and carried it out with dedication because they know that this is where they need to learn everything and utilise the opportunity given," said Kamarulzaman, who hails from Johor and was involved in the Yong Peng-Ayer Hitam North-South Expressway (PLUS) Project.

As a young engineer, Kamarulzaman was involved in projects in Bahrain and Qatar in 1992. However, he said, younger engineers at the time were not given important roles in large projects.

"Today, such approaches are no longer suitable as we want our engineers to be given exposure from earlier on.

"I am confident that after the package (of the Sabah Pan Borneo Highway) they are handling are completed, they would be able to take on projects that costs more than RM50 million," he said. -Bernama