

Japanese graduate masters Dusun, Malay with dictionary

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By Neil Brian Joseph

KOTA KINABALU: These days, it is quite rare to see youths of Kadazan Dusun descent who can speak the native language let alone understand it.

Fuyuko Iwasaki, a 29-year-old Japanese student in Sabah, has put all those youths to shame as she can fully understand the language and can even speak it.

Amazingly, she has mastered both Malay and Dusun just by relying on a dictionary and a notebook.

"I would bring my English-Malay dictionary wherever I go and would jot down each new word that I have to use. I can also understand Dusun, but in terms of speaking, I'm not that very good yet," Fuyuko said when met after receiving her Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Social Anthropology) during the 21st convocation ceremony of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) yesterday.

She first fell in love with Sabah when she took part in an international programme while still studying for her Degree in Economics back in Japan.

"In 2012, my supervisor brought me for an international programme in Sabah. That programme required us to stay in the rural areas of Sabah. I stayed in Ulu Papar for ten days," she said.

Then in 2013, she returned to Sabah. This time, she came alone.

"In 2013, I stayed at a homestay in Kg Buayan for three months. At that time, I still couldn't speak



Fuyuko with the Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Social Anthropology) she received during the 21st convocation ceremony of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) yesterday.

Malay and Dusun. That's when I started bringing my dictionary everywhere. I started talking with the villagers. I learned slowly," she said.

She said, learning Dusun is harder as grammar-wise, the words are much longer.

Her stay in the rural areas of Sabah had further sparked her interest in Sabah and its culture. In 2015, she decided to enrol in UMS for her masters in the aforementioned course.

When asked about her future plans, she said that she wants to bring Sabah's handicrafts to Japan and try to promote it there. A total of 4,951 graduates received their scrolls during the 21st Convocation Ceremony for UMS. The scrolls were presented by Head of State cum UMS Chancellor, Tun Juhar Mahiruddin.