

72-year-old Master's degree recipient inspired by Tun M

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By Neil Bryan Joseph

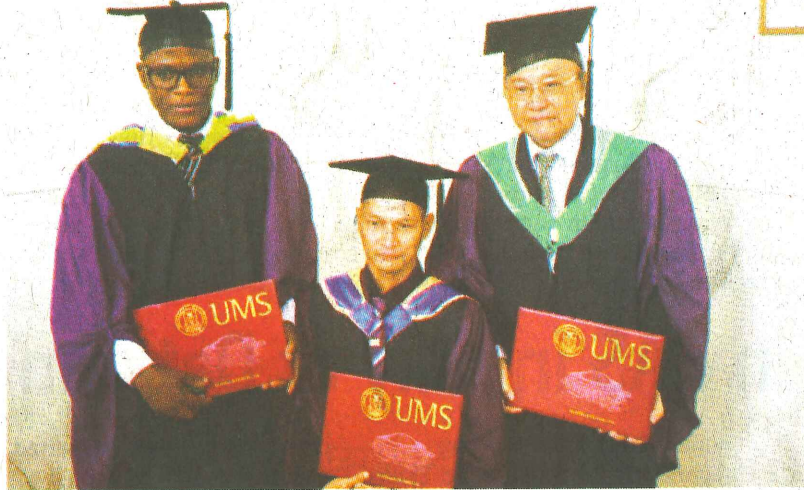
KOTA KINABALU: Former Sabah Water Department director Datuk Cosmas Julius Abah, who earned Masters in Arts (Linguistics) at 72, is proof that age should never be a barrier in fulfilling one's academic potential.

Cosmas was among 5,003 student who received their scrolls at Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) 20th Convocation Ceremony yesterday.

"Since I have already retired, many friends have asked me why I chose to continue my studies. They told me that it would not be easy (for someone my age) to conduct research.

"I came from a civil engineering background and now I have switched to doing research on linguistics. So things were really different," said Cosmas, who retired in 2003.

"At first, of course it was really hard for me. I even regretted (my



From left: Mansour, Abdul Sabah and Cosmas.

decision to enroll in this research) and questioned myself why I had put myself in this situation since it was so hard. It took me a while," he added.

He said that there were times where he almost wanted to give up but he persevered and continued to pursue his dream.

"I prayed and ask for God's guidance to continue my research and I thank God that I have finally made it," he said.

Cosmas has three children and four grandchildren.

Advising the younger generation, Cosmas said that they must never give up and that they must have the

passion in what they do.

"Linguistics is my passion. I want to preserve the Dusunic family of languages. If it is not preserved, then the language would surely cease to exist," he said.

Cosmas was also inspired by Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who made his political comeback at the age of 92.

Just like Tun Mahathir, Cosmas said that the old generation must never stop learning and must always keep their brain active by reading or learning new things.

His research is centered upon studying root words of the Dusunic family of language.

"I did this research for more than 2 years. As a native speaker of the Kadazan Papar language, I have written a book that lists down the root words of the Kadazan Papar language.

"From then on, I can continue to expand and produce a full-fledged dictionary," Cosmas said.

Meanwhile, 50-year-old Abdul Sabah Mohd echoed Cosmas'

contention; he also believes that knowledge is for everyone.

"Obtaining knowledge is the right of every human. Everyone is entitled to obtain knowledge where they see fit," Abdul Sabah said.

He holds to the principle where education should be treated as a lifelong thing, one that should be pursued till the very end.

He received his Masters degree in History scroll yesterday and he had already applied to continue his PhD.

"Without knowledge, we are nothing. Fortune may be obtained easily but knowledge is something that we have to learn.

"Our parents may give us their fortune but they can't pass knowledge to us," Abdul Sabah, who is currently working in the Education Department said.

Mansour Hassani Abdalla, 29, who hails from Tanzania also proved that education knows no boundaries, as he had travelled all the way to Sabah just to pursue his studies.