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To address the impact of energy consumption, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 7 aims to ensure that there is universal access to reliable and sustainable energy.

Themed "Sustainable Indigenous Resources for Renewable Energy", the CIMB Young Asean Leaders (CYAL) 2019 conference — a platform to mobilise young Asean people and encourage cross-cultural relations — is in line with the goal.

For Nguyen Mai Thuy, 19, from British University, Vietnam, being a part of CYAL was intellectually stimulating.

"The key takeaway is getting exposed to new ideas. Throughout the programme, I was able to see how technologies work and learn from those who are passionate about sustainability."

Viewing CYAL as a rare opportunity, she said: "In Vietnam, we don't have programmes like this. I used to think that projects are grand ideas which can't materialise. But meeting youths from different Asean countries has changed my mind."

"As an international business student, I hope to focus on social entrepreneurship by adopting innovations and turning them into a viable and sustainable business."

This year, the conference saw 50 delegates from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam attending five days of talks, site visits and group activities that sharpened their critical thinking skills.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia accounting student Master Aiman Varanon Aisham, 21, from Kuala Lumpur said it was his dream to join such programme.

"The experience enhanced my communication skills and confidence. I was exposed to languages, cultures and customs."

The delegates visited the Palm Oil Experience Centre at Sime Darby Research in Pulau Carey, Selangor.

Nguyen said: "Vietnam is experiencing very severe air pollution. Seeing innovations being carried out and countries using biodiesel as an alternative to fossil fuels, I learnt a lot from this visit. I hope to bring the knowledge back to Vietnam."

Aiman said: "The visit enabled me to better understand the local palm oil industry and exposed me to the research that goes into generating new discoveries in the field."

Returning for its seventh year, CYAL seeks to educate delegates on energy efficiency and renewables so that they can work together to uplift the quality of life of Asean citizens.

Xavier University Masters in Applied Math student Jayson N. Salvana, 22, from the Philippines saw the programme as an avenue to be a global citizen.

"I wanted to enrich myself and learn from the people from other nations. CYAL does not confine us to a specific nationality, but it views us as one."

"Meeting people from different backgrounds, we get to understand what each country is facing and expand each other's ideas to work towards greater change," said Salvana, who regarded the talk on renewable resources and energy by UKM-Yayasan Sime Darby Chair for Sustainable Development Professor Dr Mohd Sobri Takriff as his favourite.

Having served as a teacher and lecturer, Salvana hoped to give back by spreading the message.

"With immense knowledge on sustainability that



(Front row) CIMB Foundation chief executive officer Datuk Hamidah Naziadin (eighth from left), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia University Community Transformation Centre director Professor Datuk Dr Rokiah (seventh from left) and UKM Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Imran Ho Abdullah (ninth from left) with the delegates of CIMB Young Asean Leaders 2019 in Kuala Lumpur recently.

Unlocking the potential of young leaders



Nguyen Mai Thuy

I gained, I hope to educate the younger generation in the Philippines."

To foster lasting engagements and ensure sustained impact from the programme, CIMB Foundation launched the CYAL Alumni network during the closing ceremony on Sept 27 at CIMB Tower in Kuala Lumpur.

CYAL 2015 alumnus Benedict Weerasena Samarasena said the programme broke boundaries and cultural barriers.

"I gained incredible networking opportunities and friendships. Recently, two of our cohort members from Malaysia and Cambodia got engaged. It's so incredible."

The experience gained also made him more confident.

"The ability to voice out ideas, especially in an international setting, builds your confidence to speak well and articulate your ideas. CYAL has enabled me to be culturally relevant in the Asean context. Career wise, I have been given the opportunity to travel for forums in Beijing and Singapore."

For CYAL 2017 alumnus Laurencia Bella from Indonesia, the programme opened the door to a new world.

"I've always believed that we are the products of our surroundings. Being with fellow delegates and seeing their achievements inspired me."

The social media specialist said CYAL expanded her comfort zone.

"The programme inspired me to work in Malaysia. It made me realise that instead of confining myself to

Jakarta, I can work abroad.

"For my job, I was interviewed by the chief executive officer and she asked about CYAL. I explained how it was a great platform for me to discover myself



In this network of internationals, seeing the different opportunities that people take will push you further.

BENEDICT WEERASENA SAMARASENA
CYAL 2015 alumnus

and unlock my potential."

Sharing some words of wisdom for the 2019 CYAL cohort, Benedict said: "Look out for opportunities and seize them. Don't limit yourself. In this network of internationals, seeing the different opportunities that people take will push you further."

Laurencia said it was important to have a growth mindset.

"You can develop yourself through hard work. I was born into a family who has never taught me English or gone abroad. So I constantly work hard and seek opportunities."

CIMB Foundation CEO Datuk Hamidah Naziadin said the alumni network served as the next step of the CYAL journey.

"With so many great ideas generated in the past instalments of CYAL, we want to make sure that there is an opportunity to develop them into tangible outcomes. This year, to enhance the platform, we are launching our CIMB Young Asean Leaders Alumni. To date, we have 300 young leaders in the alumni committee."

She said the alumni network should align its objectives with the SDGs.

"In the opening ceremony, I spoke about Greta Thunberg, the teenage environmental activist. At 16, she is able to influence such change."

"Marley Dias, a sixth-grader, can campaign about diversity and equality through the #1000BlackGirlBooks campaign. And Malala Yousafzai can advocate for girls' education at the age of 15. So if we work together, think about what we can achieve."

Present at the closing ceremony were UKM deputy vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Imran Ho Abdullah and UKM University Community Transformation Centre director Professor Datuk Dr Rokiah Omar. Organised by CIMB Foundation in collaboration with UKM, the conference was held from Sep 23 to 27.



Laurencia Bella



Master Aiman Varanon Aisham



Jayson N. Salvana