Excellent prospects in oil and gas, says Prof

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KOTA KINABALU: Job prospects are bright in the field of petroleum engineering, according to Prof Dr Pogaku Ravindra who is the Professor of Chemical and Bioprocess Engineering at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

He said it is a hot job market, considering the severe worker shortage for the next 10 years and more.

He gave four other reasons being excellent pay, graduates in demand, choice of work environment and fast track career.

"Petroleum engineering offers the highest starting salary of all engineering degrees. Scholarships are available to those who qualify to pursue this discipline."

"And there are varied work situations and global locations, be it in the field or office."

"Besides, there is time flexibility such as a 15-day job offshore and the next 15 days onshore," he told university, college and secondary school students in his career talk at the recent Sabah Oil & Gas Conference & Exhibition 2012 (SOGCE 2012).

However, Prof Dr Pogaku, who is also the Postgraduate Coordinator of UMS School of Engineering and Information Technology, pointed out that what is much more worrying for the oil and gas sector is students' disinterest in Mathematics and Science.

"The problem is further compounded by parents' lack of encouragement. It seems there is a phobia about offshore activities such as exploration. Such a psychological barrier creates a problem."

"In whatever the case, if you have got what it takes to be a petroleum engineer, then you are cut out for a petroleum engineering career."

"We need local strength which is not happening," he lamented. "Unless our young people have the passion and curiosity to know, it may be difficult. For instance, there are people who are fascinated to know about gold."

In his presentation, Prof Dr Pogaku posed these questions to the students:

- Do you love nature (oceans, jungles and deserts)?
- Do you want to travel?
- Do you play computer or video games?
- Are you creative or imaginative?
- Are you a good communicator?
- Do you like working with technology?
- Are Mathematics and Science your favourite courses?
- Do you want to experience financial freedom and security?
- Do you want flexibility in your work environment?
- Do you want to really make a difference in our world?
- "They are good communicators, enjoy creative problem-solving, like working with people, excel at Mathematics and Science, are analytical, adapt easily to change and thrive on challenges."

Petroleum engineers are also described as environmentally concerned personnel.

"They help solve the world's energy problems while protecting the environment."

Such engineers, he added, are high-tech in that they guide drilling rigs from control rooms miles away and work with cutting-edge technology, characterised by advanced directional drilling technology, sophisticated software, remote-operated vehicles (ROVs) under water and 3-D visualisation.

Prof Dr Pogaku said petroleum engineers work in teams to use creative solutions to find oil and gas; understand rock formations; analyse oil and gas fields’ qualities; monitor drilling and production; design equipment and processes so that a maximum amount of oil and gas is recovered; manage drilling of oil and gas wells; and ensure operation runs smoothly and safely.

Using a power point presentation, he also explained how the petroleum industry works.

Offering tips for job search in the oil and gas industry, Prof Dr Pogaku said school-leavers can contact the company directly to gather the necessary information.

"What you can also do is investigate where the companies concerned post their open positions. Is the information in the newspapers or is it web advertising?"

"In fact, you may identify if there are search firms that those companies use to hire for certain occupations," he told the participants.

The tertiary students also learned that they could connect with prospective employers through a mentoring programme, a networking event or volunteer work.