

Potential jobseekers learn useful tips applicable in their workforce.

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**W**ITH informative input sessions and creative ideas on surviving in the 21st century, the inaugural International Student Conference 2013 proved to be just what the doctor ordered for over 100 local and international college students.

The conference, held last week in Georgetown, Penang, was designed to be an out-of-classroom platform for self-discovery and to set the stage for college students in managing employers' expectations in the ever-changing job market.

Beh Chin Tat, the organising chairman of the conference, hopes the event will create a small platform for knowledge exchange to harness the innovation and creativity possessed by local students.

"The initial plan was to go local first, as this is something new not only to KDU students, but also to the youth committee here in Penang," said Beh. "Inviting international students to this conference serves to provide a different and more global perspective to the topics discussed."

Backed by the student council of KDU College Penang, Beh played host to students from 14 countries - China, Korea, Japan, India, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Nigeria, Iraq, Vietnam, Indonesia and Britain.

One of the forums at the conference was "How To Survive in the 21st Century" and its panelist, Leaderonomics Campus head Andrew Lau, noted that the participants were very sharp: "It was an interactive session and I was impressed by some of their questions."

The International Student Conference also allowed the students to take charge, as 10 partici-



# An insightful student conference

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pants presented their paperwork in five concurrent sessions. With topics ranging from "Habits and Expectations of the Singaporean Millennial" to "Do Classes Kill Creativity?", it was quite a refreshing experience for Sam Shek, 20, to see his new-found friends sharing their opinions on stage.

"It is quite hard to chat about these serious matters in our day-to-day conversation," said Shek, who is pursuing mechanical and industrial engineering at Hong Kong University of Science & Technology. "This conference was a good chance for us to share our opinions and interact with each other, especially through the sessions."

Themed "Tomorrow's Leaders: To

Inspire, To Be Inspired", the conference was also an opportunity for students such as Nishaini Durairaj, an aspiring teacher, to present their ideas in public. "This was actually my first time attending a conference like this and speaking in front of such a large crowd," said the 23-year-old who is set to graduate next year with a degree in education. "I couldn't sleep the night before my presentation because I was so nervous!"

Nishaini, who presented on "Do Classes Kill Creativity?", feels that classes really do curb creativity.

"Teachers prefer the obeying method, and education institutions are spoon-feeding their students," she noted. "While formal education

is the blueprint of what we have to study, we should encourage creativity in classrooms everywhere through role-reversal, discovery learning, and by utilising a student's various intelligences."

Another compelling session at the conference was "How To Be A Truly 21st Century Graduate" by Damini Roy, a political science and economics major at Singapore Management University. She said the topic she chose was initially suggested by the organisers as a forum topic.

"I found it really interesting. It's something you can't just Google," said the 20-year-old from India. Aside from interviewing many people from professors to a Singaporean Member of Parliament,

Damini also went through multiple journals and articles to understand what employers look for these days.

"Universities often focus on academic rigour and interpersonal skills but they don't emphasise on self-introspection and reflection," she explained.

One of the ideas presented by Damini was design thinking, a cycle of five steps - empathise, define, ideate, prototype and test - that can be applied as a thought process in many areas of life.

"Design thinking is something new, and I hope everyone at the conference here will feel like they're putting on a new pair of glasses, where everything looks different afterward," she said.