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Helping young leaders her forte



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KUALA LUMPUR: Numbers and Anisha Sasheendran have a certain affinity. The 28-year-old has travelled to and worked with countless young aspiring leaders from 40 countries over the last four years.

The human capital communication executive has AIESEC — the world's largest student organisation which has provided nearly a million youth worldwide with significant leadership experience since 1948 — to thank for her global exposure.

"If I was not part of AIESEC, I would not have had the chance to do all these — travel extensively and discover human resources as my calling."

As a child, Anisha had thought she was destined for a science-related career like other family members before her.

That was partly why the Klang-born chose to major in

biotechnology at Universiti Sains Malaysia eight years ago. But an encounter with fellow students recruiting new AIESEC members on campus in 2001 changed her life.

"I signed up because of the activities available, mainly the leadership opportunities, and the work abroad programme.

"I knew it was necessary, even for a science student, to join an organisation that

would complement my other interests like business and human resources," said Anisha, who recently joined PricewaterhouseCoopers, one of AIESEC's top global partners.

AIESEC began as an organisation to develop friendly relations between member countries. Now a global association with active chapters in 800 universities in more than 100 countries, it seeks to provide an international platform for young people to discover and develop their potential.

Malaysia became a member in 1968 and has seven chapters in USM, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Taylor's University College.

Membership is open to undergraduates of all public and private institutions who are keen to hone their leadership skills and passionate about world issues. To join, they need only approach the nearest

AIESEC chapter.

She was appointed the incoming exchange executive in her second year. Her role was to introduce an exchange programme to organisations in Penang and Kuala Lumpur for them to accept international AIESEC members as part of the work abroad programme.

At 26, she worked full-time with AIESEC Malaysia as the national committee president, managing the 500-member-ship chapter for a year.

In 2007, Anisha tried her luck to work for AIESEC International at its headquarters in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

She then became the first Malaysian among the 22 individuals selected to represent the global team, and was the non-corporate relations manager at AIESEC International until August last year.

During her tenure, Anisha managed and facilitated HIV/AIDS and Entrepreneurship projects in Europe, Africa and Asia, among others.

Her stint abroad had taught her that Malaysian youth are just as talented as their international counterparts.

"I think Malaysian youth are highly capable but they lack the courage to explore their options. They are unclear about their goals and allow their environment to influence their decision.

"They are also comfortable where they are and do not want to go further."

Anisha hoped to start her own organisation which promotes youth development in Asia so that others would also get to enjoy the opportunities she had in AIESEC.



Anisha Sasheendran says Malaysian youth lack courage in exploring options

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