

Headline	Youth rise to YES challenge at Nilai UC		
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Youth rise to YES challenge at Nilai UC

"THINK not of those who say that Malaysians are an apathetic lot, and that there is nothing we can do collectively to improve the conditions of our people," extols Edmund Bon.

"Activate yourselves and others around you to act towards building self-determining and self-sustaining communities which can stand up for yourselves." These powerful and challenging words were directed towards more than 100 participants at this year's Youth Empowerment Symposium (YES), in which Bon was the keynote speaker.

Organised by Nilai University College (Nilai UC), in collaboration with the Higher Education Ministry, the World Youth Foundation and the Universiti Putra Malaysia, YES is designed to prompt youth into action by helping identify areas of concern and how young people can be agents of change.

With such a purview, it is befitting that a lawyer and human rights activist was asked to speak about the theme of this year's event — "Rights, Roles and Responsibilities".

Bon reaffirmed the need for youth to be proactive members of society. It is not enough that participants wait for an election once every five years to be involved in the democratic process. Bon

asked how many participants were registered voters and if they knew or had met their MP.

The two-day event, held at Nilai UC's campus in Putra Nilai, also saw a video conference with April Wright from American volunteer organisation Do-something.org.

Participants were briefed on how it leveraged on celebrities to gain momentum among youth to get into a culture of volunteerism.

The participants, too, made a number of presentations on topics ranging from the environment to HIV/AIDS awareness. The latter was picked as the best presentation with the students putting forward a number of ideas on how to improve awareness on the social maladies affecting the country.

Group leader, Thiban Sandramuti (BSc in biotechnology), said despite AIDS/HIV being a problem for decades, awareness was still low in the country and it remained a taboo subject.

He was full of praise for the event as it had instilled in him a sense of empowerment and belief that he could make a difference.

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involvement

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"Never have I realised the importance of the roles played by youth until I joined this programme. All thanks to YES for all the inspirational speeches and workshops which were an eye-opener for me," said Thiban.

Bon remarked that by deciding to participate in YES, the students had made a conscious effort to be engaged in their own society.

Given the enthusiasm and earnestness in which the students applied themselves over the course of the event, it was obvious to see that the seeds of social involvement had truly been planted.

Nilai UC was established in 1997 and aims to produce well-rounded graduates. To achieve this, its administrators regularly organise and host events such as YES, Future Leaders Camp and International Cultural festival with the aim of broadening student perspectives.

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Planting seeds of



Lawyer and human rights activist **Edmund Bon** urges youth to be proactive

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*Students from public and private universities participated in the **Youth Empowerment Symposium 2012**, held at **Nilai UC's** campus recently.*