



Nisah Zainal (left) and Ita Gesek feeding Dorper sheep at a farm in Runchang, Pekan, yesterday. Pic by Ainal Marhaon Abd Ghanl

Lifeline for Orang Asli

BRIGHTER FUTURE: 72 earn higher income participating in Agropolitan project

M. HAMZAH JAMALUDIN
PEKAN
hamzah@nst.com.my

WITHOUT paper qualifications, it is difficult for the Orang Asli in the Runchang resettlement scheme near here to secure good jobs that offer good income.

However, 72 of them got a golden opportunity when they were accepted to participate in the Dorper sheep rearing activities under the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) Agropolitan project near the village.

The new batch of participants were roped into the project after the first 30 Orang Asli from the same village joined the sheep rearing activities in 2009.

"Most of us will earn about RM750 monthly, but I can earn more because I prefer to do overtime work every day," said 31-year-old Ita Gesek, who has brought home RM1,200 for the past two months.

She and other participants signed an agreement to officially join the project.

State Entrepreneur Development Committee chairman Datuk Ishak Muhammad witnessed the signing ceremony held at the Dorper rearing area yesterday.

Ita, a mother of seven, said she had no problem performing her domestic roles since participants in the project only worked about five hours daily.

Before joining the project in November last year, Ita said she could only earn about RM450 monthly as a gardener at a primary school in the area.

"It's not a difficult job as we take turns to feed the animals and clean their shed every day. Most of us can

return home and continue with our daily chores in the afternoon," said Ita, who stopped schooling at the age of 15.

Anuar Sulong, 23, said he was grateful that he was accepted into the project as it allowed him to get a good income.

"I don't have any certificate as my parents could not afford to support my schooling after Year 6."

"It's not easy for me to get a good job," said Anuar, who previously earned about RM300 monthly as an assistant at a watermelon plantation.

With the extra money he earned, he planned to help his fisherman father support his four younger siblings.

"I hope they can pursue their studies to the highest level and help

bring our family out of poverty."

His friend Mokhtar Kadir, 20, said the opportunity given to the Orang Asli would definitely help them improve their living standards.

The eldest of four siblings said most of the participants were willing to work hard as they wanted to double their income in the next few years.

"We were told that we can get up to RM3,000 monthly when the number of sheep increases to 25,000 in 2015," said Mokhtar, who previously helped his father collect firewood in the nearby jungle.

ECER social development general manager Zulkifli Yaacob said, under the ECER master plan, Pekan had been earmarked for the breeding of Dorper sheep and it was expected to hold the biggest concentration of the animals by the end of 2015.

He said 1,800 Dorper sheep had also arrived from Australia recently, increasing the total number of sheep to 3,500 at present.

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Anuar Sulong
participant*