

NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

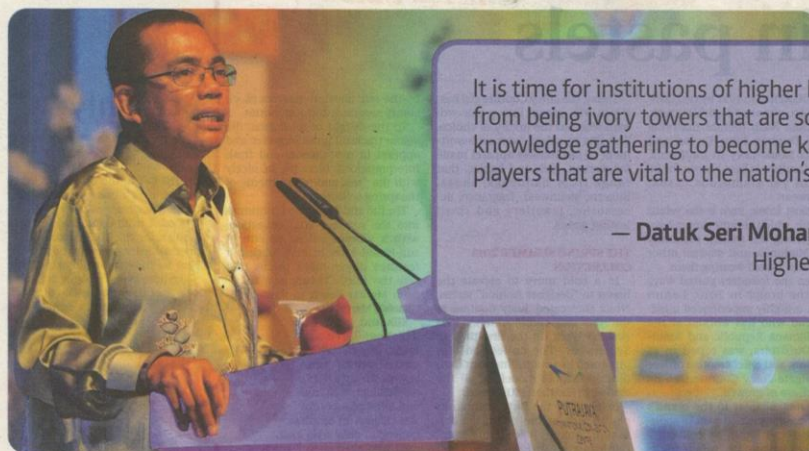
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PAGE 36 | NEW SUNDAY TIMES

MARCH



LEADING EDUCATION



It is time for institutions of higher learning to move from being ivory towers that are solely focused on knowledge gathering to become key institutional players that are vital to the nation's innovation system.

— Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin
Higher Education Minister

Bigger steps for education through ETP



MAJOR GOALS: Higher Education Ministry director-general Prof Datuk Dr Rujhan Mustafa shares with Aisyah Sulaiman measures taken by the ministry to take the nation's education system to a higher level through the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP)

Question: The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has been tasked with elevating the country's education level via the ETP. What are the projects being carried out to help realise this?

Answer: Along with the appointment of MOHE in 2010 as the torchbearer to take the country's education to the next level through the ETP, eight Entry Point Projects (EPPs) have been rolled out, with their progress closely monitored to ensure total success. The first, "EPP6 - Expanding International Distance Learning", focuses on facilitating the creation of a leading regional distance learning provider in Asia. Its milestone was the establishment of the Asia e-University, which was appointed as the main gateway for distance learning. Besides, the Malaysia Education Online website, www.medo.my, offers 25 different programmes, reflecting the collaborations between AeU and various other institutions such as DLC Worldwide (UK), Islamic Banking and Finance Institute Malaysia (IBFIM) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). By expanding the country's international distance learning, we would enhance the country's

education system by integrating the international standards of learning into our existing standard. The best part is, those interested do not have to go overseas in order to obtain the knowledge and experience. It also means a huge cut in cost, all with the same outcome of learning.

Question: How has the public responded to the project?

Answer: The support has been really positive. When the project first commenced in 2011, the number of students who enrolled in distance learning courses was 1,497. However, a year later, it shot up to 4,538, an increase of more than 300 per cent. This served as evidence of the public's acceptance of this project, and as a motivation for us to push forward. In this regard, we are planning for the Malaysian education online this year to encourage more aggressive participation by public and private universities by offering a wider range of programmes, from undergraduate to doctoral level. Besides academic programmes, we are also looking at efforts to increase the number of joint efforts with international professional education partners.



Question: How about the second project? What goal does it aim to achieve?

Answer: The second project under EPP7 is "Building an Islamic Finance

and Business Education Discipline Cluster". The ministry, together with Bank Negara and the International Islamic University (IIUM), has established a new discipline cluster which focuses on designing curriculum for all areas under Islamic banking and finance. Significant progress has been made, with the number of students enrolled in the course having increased from 6,000 in 2011 to 7,801 in 2012. Based on the appealing figures, we are taking the next step by enrolling 3,500 international students, establishing a standardised Islamic finance and business curriculum and undertaking a concerted marketing campaign to expand this curriculum beyond our shores.

Question: There's also been huge development in the health sciences education sector these past few years, with the emergence of many big names in the sector. Does MOHE play a part in this?

Answer: Of course. The development of the sector is actually the objective of our third project - "Building a Health Sciences Education Discipline Cluster" under EPP8. To achieve this, we've initiated partnerships between anchor institutions from the education sector and the allied health industry to address the shortage of healthcare professionals in Southeast Asia. In 2011, a framework was developed to set up the Malaysia Centre for Clinical Attachment and Placement (MyCCAP), which aims to serve as an allocation mechanism for public and private institutions to access practicum

opportunities in public and private hospitals. This had led to the establishment of teaching hospitals such as Masterskill University College of Health Sciences and Sime Darby Healthcare Educational Group. We are now adding another focus by broadening the programmes offered in the discipline to cater to the biomedical devices industry. By doing all this, we hope graduates could help us achieve the ultimate goal of this project - to provide better access to medical treatment with the establishment of more medical centres instead of relying solely on existing government hospitals.

Question: What has been done under the fourth project (EPP9)?

Answer: The fourth project under EPP9 is "Building an Advanced Engineering, Science and Innovation Discipline Cluster". This particular project serves to enhance scientific collaboration between researchers, industry and investors. To achieve this, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have been signed between Technology Park Malaysia Corporation (TPM), Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) and Multimedia University (MMU) to collaborate in areas related to this project. The idea is to connect innovative efforts by the academic world with the market (Lab2Market). One success is the collaboration agreement signed between TPM, UNITEN and UN10 Energy Sdn Bhd in October 2011 for the Waste Cooking Oil Biodiesel programme. This programme sup-

NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

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Page	Leading Education Excellence (36)

7, 2013

NEW SUNDAY TIMES | PAGE 37

IN EXCELLENCE

ports the sustainable development and product commercialisation of biodiesel as part of the nation's effort to achieving low carbon economy. Discussions are also underway with Universiti Teknologi Petronas to focus on research in two identified areas in the oil and gas sector, namely carbon dioxide management and enhancing oil extraction. Monash University has also expressed interest to undertake research into green electronics which would potentially boost the electronics and electrical sector.

Question: Are there any other areas that MOHE is planning to explore through the implementation of its projects under ETP?

Answer: Yes, MOHE is gearing up to provide the tourism sector with an expert workforce to sustain the positive growth. As such, the fifth project under EPP10 is placed under the flagship of "Building a Hospitality and Tourism Discipline Cluster". Under this project, we have developed a cluster consisting of hospitality and tourism disciplines for the students. If all goes well, this move will increase our annual output of hospitality personnel from 20,000 in 2009 to 50,000 students by 2020, thus making the vision to grow the tourism sector threefold by 2020 a reality. In realising this, a pilot programme was launched in May 2011 in Sarawak where students were sent for training in luxury hotels and convention centres such as the Pullman Hotel and Borneo Convention Centre, Kuching. The Malaysia Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Education (MyCentHE), which was launched on Aug 18, 2011, would also expand its work-based learning programme by offering programmes in retail and event management and partnering with vocational and community institutions to offer upskilling programmes. All is done with one objective in mind – propel tourism, increase the nation's income and provide the public with more avenues to sustain their lives from business opportunities that tourism initiatives.

Question: Are there any other ways to attract more business opportunities through education?

Answer: The ministry has attracted interest from foreign investors to develop the country into an international education hub. The sixth project under EPP11, the establishment of the 142ha campus at Educity@Iskandar, for example, has already brought big names into the country, such as the Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia, Southampton and Reading University as well as the Netherlands Maritime Institute of Technology. Historically, Malaysia has sent its students abroad for their education. But moving forward, it is now preparing to change that position by becoming the hub of its own region, that would draw in thousands of students from across Southeast Asia to its universities. Attracting foreign universities to set up overseas campuses is yet another initiative under the seventh project under EPP12, which is "Championing Malaysia's



Source: Corporate Communication Unit MOHE

International Education Brand". Under this project, the investments brought in by private foreign investors have reached billions of ringgit as it involves transactions in acquiring the institutions, construction of campuses and human resource investment. When it comes to costs, the initial investment in setting up a branch campus in Malaysia would be RM20 million while the operational costs could go up to RM100

million. Follow-up investments for the second to fifth year could reach as high as RM200 million. And that is only for the establishment of one university campus!

Question: So we have a massive ongoing educational development and strong interest from international players. What are other plans in the pipeline?

Answer: We're currently pursuing

a project specifically designed to explore a field of technology considered foreign to the education sector – game development. Under our eighth project, which is placed under EPP15, we've established the "Game Development Discipline Cluster". It brings together educational institutions, industry players, regulators, associations and the government for the purpose of enhancing talent development for

this sector. KDU has been spearheading the project by being the first higher learning institution to offer this course. Thanks to the help from involved parties, we're moving closer to the objective. If we could realise the goal of this project, Malaysia in the future could emulate the steps of countries known as leaders in this discipline within Asia, such as Japan.