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Four to be research universities

Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Malaya want to increase the number of post-graduate students, LEE KENG FATT writes

FOUR public universities will be anointed research universities on Aug 2, a status which transforms these institutions to function not only to produce graduates but also generate intellectual capital, knowledge and innovative technology.

Research universities are a natural evolution in the education system and are vital for the nation's growth in a knowledge-based economy.

They are also the natural place where new ideas are explored and to expand knowledge.

Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Malaya have evolved to be the following:

- Centres which can translate research outcomes into teaching learning curricular;
- Student-centred institutions which combine research with academic programmes;

- Rich learning environments for undergraduate and post-graduate education, and
- Vibrant centres for conducting scholarly pursuits.

The four will also seek to produce Nobel Prize winners and world-class research outputs.

These research universities, said Higher Education Ministry director-general Datuk Prof Dr Hassan Said, must be measured against top universities in the world.

Examples of model research universities include University of Tokyo, Harvard, Stanford, Oxford and Cambridge.

"By designating these four institutions as research universities, the government hopes to elevate the number of post-graduates."

To do so, they must offer academic programmes which focus on post-graduate teaching, short courses and training.

In terms of research, the



universities must also have facilities for technology transfer and technology licensing besides giving high priority to consultancy, research contracts and training contracts.

Hassan wants the universities to not only attract the top brains for teaching and research but also to attract and to produce students of high standards. They must also obtain research funds from industries and generate income for themselves.

Then there's the moulding of human capital in terms of quantity and quality of researchers and their research programmes, quantity and quality of postgraduates, innovation, producing world-

class research outputs, producing more patterns and generating high-impact research publications.

He said: "This is where people will look at us and recognise our universities as of international standards."

"The government's aim is to make the country a hub for higher education."

For RUs to achieve their goals, he said the government would provide incentives for them, such as the Research Grant Scheme, Infrastructure Grant Scheme, and Research Training Scheme.

It was also imperative, he added, that these research universities have a governance which is autonomous

with respect to decision-making and financial disbursements.

To include changes to internal and external governance, RUs must operate under a constitution. The universities realise it is not impossible to work together on research and development.

This relationship is important for them to increase their research and development value network by combining international implementation and standards used, as well as connecting with partners from industries globally.

The Ministry of Higher Education is organising the International Exposition of Research and Inventions of Insti-

tutions of Higher Learning (Pecipta) from Aug 10 to 12.

All 21 public institutions of higher learning and 10 selected private universities and colleges will attend it.

Pecipta will showcase outcomes and inventions of public and private institutions of higher learning.

The expo will display products that have been designed or invented by institutions of higher learning.

To be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, it is being held in conjunction with World Innovation Forum, 50th Merdeka anniversary and Visit Malaysia Year.

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