

# UPM wants quality graduates

**U**NIVERSITI Putra Malaysia (UPM) plans to increase the enrolment of post-graduate students to 30 per cent of total student population or 10,000 and to cap undergraduate numbers at 20,000.

The move is in line with raising undergraduate competency and UPM's international profile through the increase in collaborative research with foreign universities and with foreign post-graduate students.

"We want to focus on producing quality in our undergraduate students and we aim to increase our research activities at the post-graduate level," said vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Ir Mohd Zohadie Bardaie.

His mission, to develop Malaysia's pool of intellectual capital and place UPM on the global map, was intended to correct the perception of Malaysia's public universities.

The university wants to maintain its pole position in receiving the Government-funded Intensification of



Research in Priority Areas (IRPA) grant, which had amounted to RM153.5 million for UPM from 2001 to October 2003.

Most of the funding is directed at science and technology research in bio-science, engineering and computer sciences.

His goal is to transform UPM into a renowned research university by instituting special programmes to achieve a Nobel prize. Its aim is also to attain recognition as a national laboratory and referral centre.

"We are opening up the university to foreign students. The purpose of this is not for the immediate fi-



**PUTTING UPM ON GLOBAL MAP:** Zohadie chatting with a foreign student at a recent event.

nancing of the university's operations but to attract the best brains in the world to Malaysia," he says.

By completing their post-graduate studies here, foreign students contribute to UPM's research and development (R&D) that enables the university to operate with some financial independence.

The university supplements the public grants which it receives, with revenue from the commercialisation of its R&D and selling

its expertise through consultancy services.

UPM's plan is to generate sufficient income by 2005 to cover 20 per cent of its expenses and the target by 2010 is 30 per cent.

"In 2003, we had managed to cover 16 per cent, so we are moving in the right direction and looking at the trend we should be able to meet the target," he adds.

"We are creating a holding company to manage our findings. As an indication of our progress, in 2003 we had

18 products commercialised," he added.

Bringing foreign students in increases the effectiveness of UPM's research groups, he said. The US had attracted "the best brains" from all over the world and had given students research assistance as they worked at the universities, he added.

"The benefit is, we get our research done," says Mohd Zohadie.

And the long-term goal is for UPM to establish global linkages as foreign graduates refer to their alma mater for their future commercial needs and dealings.

"Malaysia has strong business and educational links with the UK because many Malaysians had been trained there. Over the long term, we want to create our network links all over the world by virtue of having given training to foreign students in Malaysia," he adds.

There are 7,000 post-graduate students of which 869 students are from 50 countries, mostly Asean.

"A big group is emerging

from West Asia — Jordan, Sudan, Iran and Iraq — and the numbers are increasing as a result of the Sept 11, 2001 incident in the US. After the US and UK universities, Malaysian universities are next preferred in those countries," he says.

This is owing to Malaysia's post-graduate programmes being taught in English. Most West Asian students are English conversant.

UPM's R&D collaboration includes foreign universities. Several Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements were concluded in 2003 with the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the US; University of Joensuu, Finland; South Dakota State University, the US; and with Tamar University, Yemen.

Working with Kyoto University in Japan, UPM's Institute of Gerontology is acclaimed to be the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. The Institute aims to become a reference centre for the study of the aged and ageing in the region.