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UPM, UTM shine as young varsities

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UNIVERSITI Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) made it to the list of the world's top 150 universities under 50 years old.

In The Times Higher Education 150 Under 50 Rankings 2016 released on Thursday, UPM and UTM are in the joint 101-150 positions.

Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU) took the honour of being the top Asian university, coming in second overall after Switzerland's École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL).

The Times list celebrates young universities that have created substantial impact on the global stage despite being only a few decades old, which highlights them as promising university stars.

While the judging uses the same 13 performance indicators as the flagship Times Higher Education World University Rankings — much less weightage is given to "reputation" after measuring factors ranging from teaching (30%), research (30%), citations (30%), international outlook (7.5%) and industry income (2.5%).

EPFL is topping the list for the second year in a row, while the UK has the most promising young institutions in the top 150.

Founded 25 years ago, NTU made it as Asia's top young institution for the first time in the ranking's five-year history, given the stiff competition it faces within Asia.

In fact, four of the world's six best young universities are from east Asia, NTU of Singapore, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (3rd), South Korea's Pohang University of Science and Technology (5th), and Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (6th).

NTU took the 16th slot when the rankings was first introduced in 2012.

In a statement, NTU president Professor Bertil Andersson said this latest league table reflects the talent and dedication of the NTU faculty, the quality of students, the growing global impact of its research, and the strong support of alumni and industry partners.

The United Kingdom is the most-represented country in this year's list, with 25 institutions. However, this is expected to change as eight of them will be older than 50 by next year.

"Asia's young universities are riding high in the rankings because of their countries' investments in higher education, which has rapidly increased their ability to attract top global talents.

"Their strong drive for excellence and the continuing influx of global talents will further accelerate the growth of these universities," said Andersson, who added NTU has greatly benefited from Singapore's investments in research and innovation.

Between 2011 and 2015, Singapore committed S\$16.1bil (RM46.7bil) to research and development to sustain the nation's competitiveness — a sum 20% higher than the previous five-year budget despite the economic slowdown.

Last year, NTU opened a new learning hub boasting new "flipped classroom model" of learning. The building houses 56 classrooms with flexible clustered seating, multiple LCD screens and wireless communication tools to facilitate small group dynamics.

Under this model of learning, students access course content online before class, so that face time is better spent on team-based engagement with the lecturer.

Full list of universities can be seen at www.timeshighereducation.com.