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UPM enters Asia's Top 50

TARGET SURPASSED:

Biggest leap in ranking improvement among local varsities

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University of Malaya ranks 27th best university in Asia under QS World University Rankings.



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Professor Datin Paduka Dr Aini Ideris, UPM vice-chancellor

UNIVERSITI Putra Malaysia (UPM) managed to be placed among the top 50 Asian universities while University of Malaya (UM) has once again made the country proud of its achievement by attaining the rank of 27, up two positions from last year.

According to the latest QS World University Rankings which was released last Tuesday, UPM now ranks 49th best university in Asia, moving up 17 places from its previous position and achieving the biggest leap in terms of ranking improvement among Malaysian universities.

In addition, UPM also succeeded in placing itself as Malaysia's second-best university, thus recording an impressive improvement in rankings for three consecutive years since 2014.

UPM vice-chancellor Professor Datin Paduka Dr Aini Ideris said UPM's achievements so far this year have surpassed its initial target of reaching 60th position among Asia's best universities.

"The 17-step jump from its 66th position last year will definitely bolster the spirit of the university community to further enhance the quality of teaching, learning and research in UPM," she said.

"This accomplishment will hopefully motivate UPM to continue its streak of excellence, ultimately leading to meaningful contributions for societal progress and national well-being."

This year, QS introduced a new indicator—Staff with PhDs—and among Malaysian public universities, UPM succeeded in obtaining the highest score for this indicator.

UM vice-chancellor Tan Sri Professor Dr Mohd Amin Jalaludin said the results put UM top in the nation, a position that the university has sustained since the introduction of this

ranking for universities in Asia.

He added that the results also witnessed continuous improvements due to the university community's concerted efforts that contributed to a steady rise in the ranking over the years.

"After breaking into the league of the top 30 universities in Asia last year, the new milestone achieved by the university this year is a result of better scores for the research output and impact indicators of the ranking measure," he said.

"UM scored well for its efforts in promoting student exchange and mobility programmes which benefited more than 2,000 students annually. Despite some fluctuations, the university's drive for internationalisation continued to deliver positive results on the ranking."

According to Mohd Amin, the university's focus on strengthening fundamentals through the many phases of its strategic plan has helped to cushion some of the immediate impact of certain challenges.

"The strong fundamentals built thus far provided the impetus for the university to compete regionally and internationally. The multi-pronged strategies to intensify research and emphasis on publishing in high-tiered journals has increased productivity in terms of both quantity and quality, as well as the impact of research output," he said.

Mohd Amin added that the university-industry linkages and collaborations with other regional and world-renowned institutions have led to new synergies in teaching, research, commercialisation and innovations.

"The path ahead for UM to do better in rankings is even more challenging than before as the university climbs nearer to the top league. The university needs to ensure the con-

tinuity of the strategic efforts it has put in, and that they continue to produce better results within the few financial constraints that emerged," he said.

While the results are recognition of UM's regional standing, the achievement this year did not come easy.

"Several methodological changes were made by QS that included not only re-scaling of weights assigned to ranking indicators, but also the introduction of a new criterion that measures the quality of training of academic staff in terms of percentage of staff with PhD qualification.

"Publications and citations were also weighted equally according to five areas of specialisation, which were not taken into account in the ranking system before," said Mohd Amin.

"These changes brought about a new playing field with considerable implications on the ranking results that may not be directly favourable if not systematically dealt with in future.

"Within the country, the formula has changed significantly due to the current economic conditions that demand the university to channel resources to find new sources of funding and venture into income-generating activities.

"Among others, the change impacted on internationalisation efforts, as well as the push for high impact research and drive to increase the university's global prominence that are important factors for better ranking results."

Based on the Rankings by Subject announced in March this year, four Malaysian public universities have been ranked among the world's top 100 universities for Architecture/Built Environment while the three subjects of Development Studies,

Chemical Engineering and Electrical & Electronic Engineering made it among the top 50.

UM emerged as Malaysia's top-ranking university, ranking in the top five among local public universities for 26 subjects.

Of these, UM made it among the world's top 100 universities for Architecture/Built Environment, English Language & Literature, Linguistics, Computer Science & Info Systems, Engineering - Chemical, Engineering - Electrical & Electronic, Engineering - Mechanical, Aeronautical & Manufacturing, Development Studies and Education.

Its highest rankings were 30th in the world which it achieved for Development Studies and 37th for Electrical & Electronic Engineering.

Both Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) were each ranked in the top five for 22 subjects.

Of the 22 subjects, USM made it among the world's top 100 universities for Architecture/Built Environment, Computer Science & Info Systems, Engineering - Chemical, Engineering - Electrical & Electronic, Engineering - Mechanical, and Aeronautical & Manufacturing, Pharmacy & Pharmacology, Environmental Sciences, Development Studies and Education. It is placed 46th in the world for Chemical Engineering.

UKM made it among the world's top 100 universities for Architecture/Built Environment, Education, and Social Policy & Administration.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia made it among the world's top 100 universities for Architecture/Built Environment, Engineering - Chemical, and Engineering - Electrical & Electronic, while UPM achieved its highest ranking for Agriculture & Forestry.