

GENDER EQUALITY

Empowering more women in higher education



Higher Education Minister, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh answering questions during the interactive dialogue at the #KIT programme at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

ROZANA SANI
rsani@nst.com.my

WOMEN need to be more empowered to be able to balance high-level decision-making processes.

"While the number of women enrolled in universities is high, many high-ranking posts are still held by men. Without women in the decision-making process, things will be lopsided. We balance the views of men and this makes the process more efficient," said Higher Education Ministry's (MOHE) secretary-general Tan Sri Dr Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur.

She was speaking on the sidelines of the #KIT Keeping In Touch Programme with Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh in conjunction with the ministry's International Women's Day celebration in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) recently.

Noorul Ainur, who is the first woman to hold the post of secretary-general in the ministry, said in climbing the ranks in higher education, women needed to empower other women and support each other.

"Women face many challenges — be-

ing caregivers to both children and elderly parents among others. These things need to be considered when promoting capable and qualified women to higher posts," she said.

At the event themed #WomenInHigher-Education, Idris co-hosted an interactive dialogue session with UPM student council head Aida Fitri Peli to discuss the success stories and achievements of women.

Present were ministry director-general Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hamisah Tapsir, UPM vice-chancellor Datin Paduka Professor Dr Aini Ideris, Universiti Sains Malaysia vice-chancellor Datuk Professor Dr Asma Ismail and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Nor Aieni Mokhtar.

During the dialogue, Idris said women made up 62 per cent of the total enrolment at institutions of higher learning, 48.1 per cent at polytechnics

and 41.7 per cent at community colleges. 49.4 per cent of female graduates at the end of last year have started their own businesses — generating income and creating job opportunities for others.

"The Industrial Revolution 4.0 would give women even more opportunities to shine."

He reiterated that the ministry was commit-



**We don't
shout out
enough about our
successes.**

**DATIN PADUKA PROF DR
AINI IDERIS**
UPM vice-chancellor

ted to increasing the role of women in higher education.

Addressing the issue of having more female students than male in universities, Idris said the ministry would study the situation and work to strike a balance.

"There are many male students in community colleges and polytechnics. Polytechnic is being expanded and we are ensuring that there is balances. However, in the working world, there are more men. With the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the advent of digitisation and automation will allow, more women to work from home. We are also increasing the number of women in management," he said.

Aini, the first woman vice-chancellor at UPM, said the university was working with the ministry in various areas — in this instance, to empower female students and women staff, who were highly qualified, experienced, recognised and respected.

"There is no restriction for women in the academia and the professional fields. But there are still some constraints where it comes to climbing to higher posts even though many are qualified and capable. We don't shout out enough about our successes. Visibility is important to allow people to see our contributions and enable us to contribute more."

She said women should not fault their traditional roles as homemakers as the reason for not being able to succeed.



**Tan Sri Dr Noorul Ainur
Mohd Nur**