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Malaysian varsities prove their worth

IN the recently announced QS World University Rankings: Asia 2019, Malaysia has experienced a successful year with noteworthy results.

Five of its public universities have entered the top 50 positions, and 19 others have moved up the ranks.

Universiti Malaya (UM) made history when it broke into the top 20 at No. 19, its highest since the ranking's inception, now in its 10th edition.

The other four were Universiti Putra Malaysia (34th), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (41st), Universiti Sains Malaysia (43rd) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (47th).

UM vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Hashim said the latest ranking was not only an improvement from 24th last year, but also placed it among the top four per cent in Asia.

"Of the 11 indicators, the 'International Research Network' was the strongest for UM, which ranked third among the top 300 Asian universities. UM also excelled in 'Academic Reputation' and 'Employer Reputation' indicators at 25th and 30th place, respectively.

"Since 2014, UM has gained 13 places and over the five considered years, it has always illustrated positive performance," said Rahim.

The improved rankings represents regional recognition of UM's quality in teaching, research and international collaboration. At the same time, he attributes this success to the commitment of the staff and their dedication towards achieving the university's strategic plan.

Rahim said the future emphasis of UM would be continuing its primary focus of establishing stronger academic fundamentals, intensifying research collaborations and enhancing academic-industry partnerships.

For Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), vice-chancellor Professor Datin Paduka Dr Aini Ideris said the higher-learning institution had shown positive performance over the past five years.

"This year, UPM's excellent results are clearly manifested through our internationalisation efforts. We achieved high scores in the 'Student Exchange' (inbound and outbound) indicator.

"This shows UPM is recognised and visible globally," said Aini, adding that other high scores were in research network and faculty.

She said the university's achievement would definitely play a big role in shaping the perception of its stakeholders, which would improve its potential to generate income.

"This improvement is also due to the staff's team effort and their willingness to embrace core organisational values of excellence, diversity, sustainability and integrity."

UPM is also Malaysia's best performer in the 'Staff with PhD' indicator (at 95th position).

"We believe that the competition in academic staffing indicators at some of the best universities in China, South Korea, Hong Kong and India has affected UPM's position.

"Therefore, UPM will continue enhancing its performance through a comprehensive strategy in its academic succession plan," said Aini.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) dep-



Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Hashim



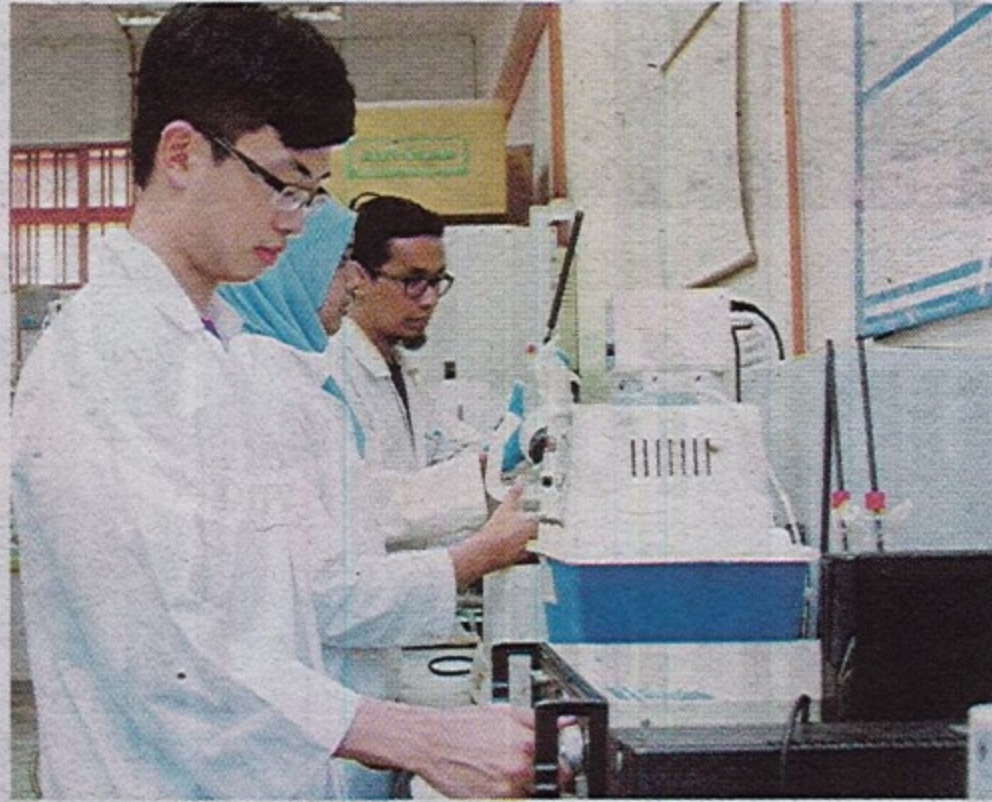
Professor Datin Paduka Dr Aini Ideris



Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Marzuki Mustafa



Professor Dr Mohamed Ibrahim Abdul Mutalib



Universiti Malaya is establishing stronger academic fundamentals, intensifying research collaborations and enhancing academic-industry partnerships.

ty vice-chancellor (academic and international) Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Marzuki Mustafa believes the QS ranking is a "useful" comparison of the university's standing in Asia.

However, Marzuki said UKM realised that the rankings did not capture all the important aspects of the institution.

"It should not be used as the absolute indicator for performance, which should take national policies into account and, most importantly, the university's mission."

He added that UKM's strategic initiatives were driven by three main outcomes — to produce competent, creative and competitive graduates with national aspirations; to conduct high-impact research and innovation; and entering into strategic partnerships and engagements.

"We strongly believe that by focusing on these core areas and by being visible and impactful, the main mission of the university can be achieved together with improvements in ranking."

Meanwhile, Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) is the only private university to make it into the top 100 list, moving up two rungs from 101st place last year.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Mohamed Ibrahim Abdul Mutalib said since 2014, UTP had gained 92 places — a highly commendable achievement considering its young age.

"We are sixth, right after all the Malaysian research universities that are much older than us. Over the five years, UTP has moved up four times.

"UTP would like to emphasise that we are not gaming on the rankings, but rather, it is a result of the university's performance.

"This enables us to develop strategies in addressing gaps and ensuring quality education.

"Our journey continues with emphasis on

MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITIES RANKINGS IN ASIA FOR 2018 AND 2019

2019	2018	Institution
19	24	Universiti Malaya
34	36	Universiti Putra Malaysia
41	43	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43	46	Universiti Sains Malaysia
47	49	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
99	101	Universiti Teknologi Petronas
128	131	Universiti Utara Malaysia
135	150	Taylor's University
137	158	Universiti Teknologi Mara
143	163	International Islamic University Malaysia
175	179	Multimedia University
178	212	UCSI University
188	281-290	Universiti Malaysia Pahang
188	251-260	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

Source: QS Quacquarelli Symonds

INFOGRAPHIC NST



With the availability of more funding, Malaysian universities can achieve a balanced profile in research.

PROFESSOR MICHAEL J. DRISCOLL

Taylor's University vice-chancellor and president

strategies leading towards academic leadership, research stewardship, students' experience and operational excellence," said Ibrahim.

UTP is also Malaysia's best performing university in the 'Paper per Faculty' indicator, which it placed 74th regionally.

Ibrahim said UTP did not only emphasise the quality of its publications, but also the quantum of papers published by its faculties.

"The commitment from each faculty member in publishing their work while maintaining the requirements of UTP has contributed significantly to this ranking indicator," he said.

Another private university in the QS Asia list is Taylor's University, which ranked 135th compared with 150th last year.

Its vice-chancellor and president, Professor Michael J. Driscoll, said to be effective in research, academics need to be provided with resources and be released from certain teaching duties so they can be committed to research.

He said another move that will stimulate research is the availability of strategic funding.

"I feel that it boils down to the availability of resources, both in terms of funding and expertise. Universities may opt to invest in areas where they have expertise rather than throwing the net wide.

"With the availability of more funding, Malaysian universities can achieve a balanced profile in research.

"I believe that Malaysian academics are on a par with their counterparts worldwide. It is a matter of harnessing potential and that is only possible with more investment," said Driscoll.

Taylor's University has set its sights to move up among the top 100 in Asia by 2022.

Malaysia, with 26 of its universities ranked, is the fifth most represented country after China (111), Japan (89), India (75) and South Korea (57).