

Academics honoured for excellence

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THE areas of technology development, restructuring of health systems financing and restructuring of the education system to cater to industries, are expected to pave the way for greater development in the country in the future.

National Academic Laureate Prof Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram said these areas were of importance and provided opportunities for us to further develop the country.

"These are among the ideas I will work on for the people and the development of the country.

"There are many good opportunities now if we are looking towards developing the nation. I admit, there are many challenges as well, but the changes happening now in the country will enable the sharing of thoughts and discourse," he added.

Jomo, 66, was named the National Academic Laureate at the Education Ministry's 12th National Academic Awards (AAN) on Tuesday.

The economist, who is also a member of the Council of Eminent Persons, was accorded the honour in recognition of his contributions in the field of education and economy.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad presented him the award, which also came with a RM200,000 cash prize, a certificate and trophy.

Jomo was among seven academicians honoured at the event for excellence in various categories.

The others are Assoc Prof Dr Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor (Book Publication); Faizul Noorizan (Art and Creativity —



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik with the recipients of the awards. Also present was Education ministry secretary-general Datuk Dr Mohd Gazali Abas and Higher Education director-general Datin Dr Siti Hamisah Tapsir.

Craft Cluster); Assoc Prof Dr Mawar Safei (Art and Creativity — Creative Writing); Assoc Prof Dr Wan Zuhainis (Teaching — Pure Science Cluster); Assoc Prof Dr Fauziah Abdul Rahim (Teaching — Applied Literature and Applied Social Science); and Assoc Prof Dr Juan Joon Ching (Future Academician Award).

They each received a RM50,000 cash prize plus a certificate and a trophy.

Jomo also said any idea and thought can be developed if it goes through debate.

"If there are no debates or exchange of thoughts and opinions, it will be difficult especially for government policies to work as planned.

"The mass media now which is also free now, enables more opportunities to be debated openly.

"I'm not up for debates with only one side especially if it was with those with power only.

"For me, it is important for the opposition to also have a voice. When we voice out, it shouldn't only have short-term political interest but we should also think about what is good for the national interest," he added.

He said although he had been suggested many times for the award previously, he was not selected, and that this was the highest recognition he had received in the country.

Jomo has also served as the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development in the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Research Coordinator for the G24 Intergovernmental Group on International Monetary Affairs and Development; a member of the Stiglitz Commission of Experts of the President of the UN General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System; and adviser to the President of the 63rd UN General Assembly from

2005 to 2012.

Through his service with the UN, Jomo successfully built an international consensus to ensure complementary economic and social policies for sustainable development, appropriate investment incentives, employment generation, and a strong economic recovery.

He has published works covering a wide range of subjects; from development economics and industrial policy, to affirmative action, ethnic relations, and Malaysian history.

Another award winner at the AAN for the Applied Literature and Social Science category, Associate Professor Dr Fauziah Abdul Rahim, 48, hoped her win and recognition would spur other academicians to be innovative in designing teaching activities for their students.

She said learning should be made interesting by involving students in various learning activities.

"My teaching techniques are mainly focused on incorporating technology where students have to bring along their handphones and laptop.

"I practice the BYOD (bring your own device) concept. Students had a hard time accepting the concept but eventually it became a habit. In fact they requested me to continue the teaching technique," she added.

Fauziah said her classes are not fully focused on lectures. She incorporates various learning activities based on the microbiology subject that she teaches.

She added that every student has to achieve the learning target which she has already set.

"The teaching techniques through 'active learning' where students don't have to go for lectures and take part learning-based activities," she added.

Fauziah has been teaching at the Biotechnology and Molecular Science Faculty in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) for the past 11 years.

Meanwhile, Associate Professor Dr Juan Joon Ching, 38, from Universiti Malaya (UM) who received the Promising Academician Award, said the award was the highest recognition he has received throughout his career as university lecturer.

"This also serves as an encouragement for me to work harder in the field of academics, research and teaching.

"Prior to this, I have received several awards including the 2016 National Young Scientist Award, Malaysia Research Star Awards 2017 and several other award from UM.

"My expertise is in the area of chemistry and currently I serve in the UM Nanotechnology & Catalysis Research Centre," he added.

He said the country's academic field should be improved and enhanced further.

He said students nowadays are easily bored with old techniques therefore teaching should be interactive, including the use of e-learning, besides publishing high-impact research.

"Researches need not be many, but it has to be of quality," he added.



National Academic Laureate Prof Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram with his trophy.