

Varsities improve in rank

Malaysia now has 15 in list of world's best universities

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PETALING JAYA: A record 15 Malaysian universities qualified for the Times Higher Education (THE) Asia University Rankings 2021, compared to eight last year.

Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) made a huge leap in the 2021 edition when it jumped two bands to achieve its first ever top 200 finish.

The ninth edition of the international university rankings also saw Universiti Kuala Lumpur and Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka making their debut in the 401+ band, and five out of six Malaysia's top-performing universities improving or maintaining their positions.

Universiti Teknologi Petronas moved up 13 spots to 111th place, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman maintained its position at 119th, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) climbed nine places to finish at 136th and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) climbed 10 places to 150th.

Although Universiti Malaya (UM) dropped six places, it still ranks in the top 50.

UM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor said he was pleased that "warga UM" (UM citizens) continued to place Malaysia on the global stage through their dedication, commitment and hard work towards serving the nation and impacting the world.

"UM will continue to strive to push the boundaries of knowledge and nurturing aspiring leaders," he said yesterday.

UKM deputy vice-chancellor (research and innovation affairs) Prof Datuk Dr Abdul Wahab Mohammad, who expressed happiness with the university's placement into the top 150 for the first time, said this was a result of the efforts by all at the university over the past two years.

He said the university had restructured its

Malaysia's top five universities in the Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2021

University	2021 rank	2020 rank
Universiti Malaya	49	43
Universiti Teknologi Petronas	=111	124
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman	=119	=119
Universiti Putra Malaysia	136	145
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	=150	=160

Source: Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2021

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research ecosystem, as well as its performance measurement system.

"We restructured the research ecosystem within the university by putting more emphasis on multi-disciplinary research. This way, research becomes more prominent and more academics will start to focus on research," he added.

UPM deputy vice-chancellor (academic and international) Prof Dr M. Iqbal Saripan said the university's rise in the rankings showed that it was progressing despite the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic had posed.

UUM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Bashawir Abdul Ghani said their two-band leap was a significant and meaningful achievement.

Six main factors contributed to the success of the varsity's jump, he said.

They are quality of human resource with employee happiness as a crucial factor, the incorporation of a progressive corporate culture, establishing a global UUM brand known for its quality and trustworthiness, adhering to and upholding the importance of ranking among universities, focusing on its niche area in business and management, and taking cognisance of the importance of the English language.

THE chief knowledge officer Phil Baty said these rankings were an important measure of the strength of higher education across the continent.

"It is great to see a number of Malaysia's universities improve or maintain their previous positions, despite the growing competitiveness across the region.

"Achieving a top 50 position in these rankings is a great achievement, but to do so for four consecutive years, as UM has, is testament to its strengths nationally, regionally and globally.

"It will be interesting to see what happens in Malaysia over the coming years, and how universities adapt to the post-Covid world," he said in a statement yesterday.

Despite the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Baty said there might be an opportunity for Malaysian universities to attract and retain more regional students and academic staff as disruption to the traditional talent flow continues.

This year, 551 universities rank in total compared to 489 in 2020, with China's Tsinghua University and Peking University claiming the first and second spot while Singapore's National University of Singapore took third place.