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New dimension at KUKTEM

CALL it "internationalisation" or another facet of globalisation, but the gradual alliances between local universities and their foreign counterparts has given a new learning dimension to undergraduates.

Just ask nine academic staff and engineering students of Kolej Universiti Kejuruteraan dan Teknologi Malaysia (KUKTEM).

Come April, they will head for Fachhochschule Nuremberg, Germany, a premier engineering institution which KUKTEM signed an agreement with to enable academic staff and students from both campuses to experience a new lifestyle.

Explains Professor Datuk Dr Abu Azam Yassin, KUKTEM's rector whose experience while pursuing his PhD in the UK and working visits to India and Germany drove him to seal the link between the two engineering universities.

"We evaluated the benefits that the alliance would bring to the students and academic staff from a professional and personal point of view," he said.

KUKTEM students pursuing courses in industrial and chemical engineering can pursue similar courses on a shorter basis while in Nuremberg, which is famed for its highway and rail networks to other European cities.

Also, the cost of living in Nuremberg is cheaper compared with Germany's major cities such as Munich and Frankfurt.

Abu Azam said: "The stint would broaden their minds and they can interact with students from different races and cultural backgrounds."

From a professional view point, he said Malaysian engineering companies had come long way since the era of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We can see many of our companies opening up across the world and we can play our part by moulding graduates who are not only armed with degrees but also language skills and international exposure to cater to their (the companies) re-quirements."

He added that it would be nice if Malaysian companies could operate overseas "lock, stock and barrel" where Malaysian engineers and workers could be there doing everything.

While his explanations point to a bright future for its budding engineers, one should not also forget the international experience craved by their German counterparts.

"We can expect some of their lecturers to come here during their summer break to teach and learn more about our research methods. Some visited us on an ad-hoc basis last year."

"After the pioneer batch returns in August, we expect to send more students (to Nuremberg) in the years to come and vice versa from Nuremberg."

On possible tie-ups with other foreign universities, he said preliminary negotiations had started between it and Hamburg Technical University in Germany, and City and Coventry universities located in the United Kingdom.

"These universities adopt a common learning method like us, where the emphasis is to prepare graduates for the industry. However, negotiations are still at an early stage and its to premature for us predict when we can start our alliances with them."

The university has 1,000 students pursuing technical and engineering courses at its campus in Gambang, Pahang.

