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UPM's vision of success

AFTER seven decades of striving towards academic excellence, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) now considers itself to be among the top institutions of higher education locally and internationally.

Guided by the eight main goals in its Plan of Action 2001-2010, the university aims to ensure that its vision and mission to be a centre of excellence are materialised.

Among its goals are to produce quality graduates, to transform UPM into a renowned research university and to upgrade it into a renowned center of learning, agricultural and bio-resource services internationally.

UPM also constantly upgrades the quality of its academic programmes to tailor to the market demands of the workplace. It offers 74 baccalaureate programmes and eight diploma programmes, as well as 12 postgraduate programmes at the master's and Ph.D. levels.

Among the programmes available at the main campus at Serdang include Human Ecology, Economics and Management, Veterinary Medicine, Engineering, Modern Languages and Communication.

Other courses are Educational Studies, Forestry, Agriculture, Medicine and Health Science, Design and Architecture, Food Science and Biotechnology, Computer Science and Information Technology.

The array of fields of study and specialisations offered has attracted a large number of students from 62 countries to pursue their postgraduate study at UPM.

Not only that, UPM's strength also lies in its research in science and technology. In fact, it became the biggest recipient for the Intensification of Research Priority Areas funding (known as IRPA), specified in the 8th Malaysia Plan. More than RM136 million is received, constituting 27.9 per cent of the total amount allocated for research institutions.

The establishment of UPM as a proactive, excellent and global knowledge centre will indeed strengthen UPM's status as a world-class university by the year 2010. By that year, UPM is also targeting that 90 per cent of its lecturers would be Ph.D. holders. Now, almost 63 per cent of its lecturers are Ph.D. holders.

UPM had its humble beginnings as a School of Agriculture in 1939. Until 1941, it was offering a three-year diploma course and a one-year certificate course, and the school trained 321 officers (before the Japanese Occupation in Malaya), comprising 155 diploma holders and 166 certificate holders.

It was six years later that it was officially opened as the College of Agriculture, Malaya by the Governor of the Malayan Union, Sir Edward Gent.

The idea of forming Universiti Pertanian Malaysia was the brainchild of Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, the then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. This idea led to the merger of the Agriculture College of Malaya with the Faculty of Agriculture, Universiti Malaya; hence the establishment of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM). Dr Mohd Rashdan Baba was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor.

From a traditional university focusing on undergraduate studies in agriculture and related fields, UPM has from the early 1980s expanded to include science and technology.

It was in 1994 that UPM formulated a plan to become the 'university of the next millennium', providing an up-to-date educational system with

state-of-the-art facilities for the science and technology fields, while emphasising the need to include information technology in its day-to-day applications.

Since then, UPM has rapidly transformed to a borderless campus extending beyond the national boundaries.

This dream became a reality in 1997 when the then Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad officially declared the change of name from "Universiti Pertanian Malaysia" to "Universiti Putra Malaysia".

UPM's Bintulu branch campus in Sarawak, situated 20km from Bintulu, began operations in 1987 offering Diploma programmes in Agricultural Science and Forestry Science. Diploma in Agribusiness programme was introduced in 1998. In 1994, the campus was closed down and its premises were used as the Bintulu Science Teachers Training College until 1999. The campus was reopened in 2001.

For details, log on to: www.upm.edu.my