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Title : MOU SIGNING CEREMONY BETWEEN MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

In the name of Allah, Most Loving, Most Merciful.

Y.B. Dato' Mustapa bin Mohamed, Minister of Higher Education;

The Honourable Prof. Sir Colin Campbell, Vice Chancellor the University of Nottingham;

His Excellency Bruce Elliot Cleghorn, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland;

Y.Bhg. Dato' Dr. Zulkefli A. Hassan, Secretary General Ministry of Higher Education,

Y.Bhg. Dato' Prof. Dr. Hassan bin Said, Director General Department of Higher Education Ministry of Higher Education;

Vice Chancellors and Rectors of Malaysian Universities and University Colleges,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Thank you for inviting me to be part of this commendable initiative of establishing a formal collaboration between Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. I am glad to be here today and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry of Higher Education, the Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham for their effort to officially formalise the Split PhD programme that will be undertaken by Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham.

2. All of us here are aware, I am sure, of the need to learn from each other. As such, we would need to look at the best practices in relation to higher education and these best practices may come from any part of the world. The main determining factor would be our willingness to learn from each other and there should always be willingness to knowledge sharing amongst us. I believe that is one of the reasons why we are here today to witness the formal collaboration between Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham.

3. The signing of today's MoU between Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham represents the beginning of an academic collaboration that will yield benefits to both parties in terms of academic and research enhancement. It also represents the achievement of our effort to internationalize our higher education sector. There are various definitions given by scholars and various organizations engaged in the internationalization of the higher education sector. The meaning of internationalization has been closely linked with international activities or initiatives.

It is often referred as multicultural education; international education, international programmes, and of course study abroad programmes such as through students exchange or academic staff exchange.

4. To put it in layman's terms, internationalization can be described as our effort to include an international perspective in the core business of our institutions of higher learning that is teaching, research and service. The proposed Split PhD programme named as the Malaysia – Nottingham Doctoral Programme (MNDP), that will be implemented between Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham has indeed added another dimension in the mode of internationalizing our higher education sector through institutional collaboration between both parties.

5. Besides achieving the objectives of internationalizing our higher education sector through institutional collaboration, the Split PhD programme that will be undertaken through today's MoU will certainly contribute to the target set in the Ninth Malaysia Plan i.e. to increase the number of academic staff with PhD qualification (or its equivalent qualification) in public universities. As we are all fully aware, the Ninth Malaysia Plan has set a target that by the year 2010, 60 per cent of the total academic staff in public universities will be equipped with PhD qualification or its equivalent qualification.

6. Malaysia as a country that is pursuing the objective of becoming a hub for educational excellence must consider the internationalization process strategically and careful thought must be given by taking into account the impact of globalisation which places high value on knowledge economy. We will have to take advantage of the transfer of knowledge between countries and the demand for higher education through mobility of individuals seeking quality higher education. Quality is crucial in sustaining the internationalization of our higher education sector. Any university or college that is considering internationalizing its campus must be able to provide high quality programmes that could gain international recognition.

7. Perhaps an initial step towards gaining international recognition could be in the form of teaming up amongst educational providers under tightly defined and rigorously enforced conditions, to establish a system of joint recognition of higher education qualifications. It also pertinent that we should have capabilities to undertake programmes that are of international standings and in this respect we should embark on capacity building of our institutions.

8. In an era of continuous economic change there is always new and emerging market for all forms of higher education and professional or vocational competence. Even in Malaysia, not to mention the global scenarios, new markets for basic further, higher and continuing education and training are evolving. In the light of this situation, the Malaysian government will take various measures to promote higher learning among all Malaysians.

9. I would like to take this opportunity to turn to the question of research. We all fully understand that cutting-edge research in all the disciplines is not only the bedrock of effective teaching but also the major means of advancing knowledge creation to meet global problems head-on. I would like to see that the collaboration between Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham to consider practical ways to advance research across the disciplines – research that has special significance for both countries, and for interregional relations.

10. One way to do this will be to build research clusters of scholars, bringing together both senior, established researchers and promising junior researchers from the two continents. This will be achieved through concentrated, multinational groupings of researchers who will explore issues of importance to business, to the public sector and government, and to the wider community. Of course, in order to establish collaborative research of this kind will require resources and not all countries, have an abundance of resources.

11. This is where genuine inter- institutional cooperation can help, so that funds and expertise can be pooled and so that the whole communities of researchers can benefit through a win-win situation. I would also like to urge that all institutions of higher learning in Malaysia to further explore and establish collaborations with well renowned universities or institutions in the world in order to enhance our capabilities besides capacity building.

12. The success of research is not only determined by its publication in journals of high standing, but also by its commercialization potentials. It is therefore crucial that research activities should also take into consideration the return of the investment in research projects. The Ninth Malaysia Plan revealed that only 3.4 percent of the research projects funded under the IRPA programme in the Seventh Malaysia Plan were commercialised in the Eight Malaysia Plan. In this respect, public universities through their respective Research Management and Commercialization Unit should play a more aggressive role to increase the uptake of commercialization of their research findings. Though commercialization is crucial, but it must also be emphasized that Universities should also continue to conduct fundamental research which will form the basis for new scientific and technological advancement and discovery.

13. Finally, I wish that today's collaboration between Malaysian Universities and The University of Nottingham will further enhance greater collaborations between both parties. I look forward to seeing positive outcome from today's understanding.

Thank you.