

KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
TARIKH: 18 JANUARI 2017 (RABU)

Bil	Tajuk	Akhbar
1.	Universities can drive nation's growth	New Straits Times
2.	Amaran hujan lebat di Pantai Timur Semenanjung	BERNAMA

KERATAN AKHBAR
NEW STRAITS TIMES: MUKA SURAT 16
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MY SCHOOL
OF THOUGHT



HAZLINA
AZIZ

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITIES CAN DRIVE NATION'S GROWTH

Academic research can be translated into practical solutions to benefit industry, academia, government and society

THERE seems to be no shortage of appetite for inspirational content in the news for Malaysians. Success stories from any one of us always make news, as they have always been. Nowadays, they do not only guarantee viral sharing but also invite discussions among the public.

The breaking news of supermassive black hole in our solar system's backyard last week by our own Nur Adlyka Alnu Annuar, a PhD student in the United Kingdom, went viral almost immediately upon announcement. Achievements can also trigger criticisms and debates as was in the case of Penang footballer Mohd Faiz Subri when he won the 2016 FIFA Puskas Award.

The inspiration that makes such news popular gives Malaysians hope that nothing is impossible. For a developing nation like ours, hope plays a potent role to move forward. There is always room for improvement — as for some of us who opine that the ability to converse in English complements success — that would lead to accomplished performance. Without doubt, education in every sense is the fundamental factor of development and growth of a country.

Despite an incredible intellectual attainment on the frontiers of astrophysics, Nur Adlyka, in her email to thank us for the coverage, also shared her hope that her discovery could help her land a job when she returned home after studies. She is aware that her options, apart from the universities, would be narrowed down to the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry or the National Space Agency.

Her aspiration clearly states why students go to university — it is about getting a job and leading a successful

career. And, it is this purpose that makes the theme of Higher Education Ministry's mandate for this year, as presented by its minister, Datuk Seri Idris Jusu last week, timely.

The theme of "Redesigning Higher Education", in which its aspiration, vision and planning began as early as two years ago, is appropriate to meet the business of running a university today. The 2017 mandate of the country's higher education addresses the growing challenges of global competition to the diverse student body and new technology.

With the ministry's efforts in the aspect of graduates' marketability, the past five years had shown a 28 per cent improvement from 74.4 per cent in 2012 to 77.2 per cent last year. It aims to achieve more than 80 per cent by 2025.

One initiative is through iCGPA, short for Integrated Cumulative Grade Point Average, which not only reflects a student's academic achievements but also soft skills, knowledge, values, leadership abilities and critical thinking. The other initiative is 2u2i, a work-based learning programme where students learn for two years in university and work for two years to gain industrial experience.

Globalisation and automation have shrunk jobs, requiring a middling level of education. With demand for retraining and lifelong education among workers of all ages, universities are responsible for training and retraining workers in their careers. Workers who have the means to do so need to upgrade their education level to stay ahead of the labour-demand curve.

In addressing this, the ministry puts in place greater support for flexible education and lifelong learning



Universiti Malaysia's biomedical engineering student, Nur Adlyka Alnu Annuar, fitting the 'My Smart Leg' prosthetic limb on a man. Universities are turning discoveries into practical solutions.

through the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning Credit Award developed by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

However, public universities have to accept the changes to funding as the government will no longer subsidise the institutions as generously as they used to. So, besides assuring the quality of the degrees and experience the institutions offer, universities must also start putting in place strategies to monitor their financial health.

The government's RM5.58 billion investment from 2007 to 2015 in research and development has generated RM7.17 billion in revenue, representing 28.5 per cent in returns

from research investment.

With 2017 declared the year of translational research, the spotlight is on translating academic research into practical solutions to benefit industries, academia, government and society. Focus will be on promoting talented researchers who are involved in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Higher education leadership in the country is, thus, more competitive. The requirement of business background is as important as academic credibility to maintain the effective and efficient business model of a university. With numerous stakeholders to satisfy, which leads to greater ex-

pectations, the pressure is mounting for vice-chancellors.

The traditional view is that universities are about pure learning, that is, they educate only a tiny elite. Today, it does not only function to equip people to earn a living, it also cashes in on discoveries by turning research into revenue, indirectly providing a marketised view of higher learning institutions through how lucrative the sector is to the country's economy.

[hazlina@nst.com.my](mailto: hazlina@nst.com.my)

The writer is NST's education editor, and is an ex-teacher who is always on the lookout for weirdly spelled words

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Amaran Hujan Lebat Di Pantai Timur Semenanjung

KUALA LUMPUR, 17 Jan (Bernama) -- Hujan lebat dijangka melanda Pantai Timur Semenanjung Malaysia mulai esok hingga Jumaat.

Menurut kenyataan **Jabatan Meteorologi (MetMalaysia)** hari ini, ia susulan jangkaan berlaku pertembungan luruan sejuk dan angin timuran yang boleh menyebabkan berlaku episod hujan lebat monsun.

"Amaran hujan lebat peringkat kuning telah dikeluarkan bagi Kelantan, Terengganu dan Pahang bagi tempoh berkenaan," kata MetMalaysia

--BERNAMA