

No mountain too high for UKM graduates

RAYYAN RAFIDI
rayyan.rafidi@nstp.com.my

WINNING the prestigious Anugerah Pelajaran Diraja came as a pleasant surprise for Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences graduate Farahana Mohamed, 27.

"I did not expect to receive the award as I wrote the text for the award interview when I was taking care of my mother at the intensive care unit."

In August, Farahana's mother was admitted to hospital for chronic liver disease.

Her father, a former labourer, had suffered a stroke when she was 17, causing her family to lose their breadwinner.

Coming from an underprivileged background, she worked for a year after finishing her diploma to pursue her degree.

At UKM, she diligently served as vice-president of the Student Representative Council.

Another Anugerah Pelajaran Diraja recipient was law graduate Nalina Santhiran, 23.

Hailing from Teluk Intan, Perak, Nalina had a penchant for public speaking and served as president of the Asian Law Students' Association.

"I owe it to my parents, who sacrificed a lot for me to be here today. I believe that university is a place for you to grow as a person. To grow, you need to challenge yourself and step out of your comfort zone."

"For students, always focus on your studies and do what you love," said Nalina.

Both students were honoured for their exceptional achievements in academics and co-curriculum at UKM's 47th convocation held at the varsity's campus in Bangi, Selangor, from Nov 2 to 5.

Sickness and disability were not obstacles for UKM students, said Dr Mohd Khairi Ismail, 31, who graduated with a PhD in environment and development.

"When I was born, my parents were also told that I would not live long. I only started walking at age 3, and I could not read until I was 8. But now, I am here, with my parents' blessings," he said.

Wahida Khalid, who was diagnosed with arteriovenous malformation in her fourth year, successfully completed her studies in medicine and is on the way to becoming a doctor herself.

"It was difficult at first, but I took the challenges in stride. I discussed with my deputy dean and lecturers how to complete my studies while being wheelchair-bound, and they helped a lot," she said.

For Dr Zulkafli Amat, 57, he finally became an alumni of his institution this year after having worked in UKM for 28 years.

It was double the joy for the Doctorate in Business Administration graduate as he donned the mortarboard because it was also the same day that his daughter, Nazatul Husna Zulkafli, 25, received her Bachelor of Business Administration.

"Firstly, I am thankful to God as not only did I complete my doctorate, but I also get to celebrate



Wahida Khalid sharing a proud moment with her parents.

it with my daughter. I am grateful to my wife and children, as well as UKM for always supporting me in my doctorate studies," said Zulkafli.

The four-day ceremony saw 7,655 graduates receiving their scrolls, including doctorates (531), masters (2,551), Master of Medicine (specialisation) (235), Master of Dentistry (specialisation) (160), and Master of Advanced Medical Speciality in Dermatology (eight).

A total of 4,208 degrees were awarded, besides 101 postgraduate diplomas and 19 diplomas.

UKM Chancellor Yang di-Pertuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir chaired the first session.

In his speech, Tuanku Muhriz said the awards given out was a recognition of the exemplary excellence nurtured by UKM, which had produced quality graduates in academic performance and character.

"The university serves as an open platform for exploration and development in various fields of knowledge. However, academic freedom has to be based on truth, scholarship and high integrity as, in the end, academic honour will determine the peace and prosperity of society."

The Vice-Chancellor's Award was bestowed on Bachelor of Islamic Studies (Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilisation) graduate Muhammad Aij Fitri Abdul Halim, 23.

Aij Fitri said, "I want to show that being married with a child does not stop you from achieving academic success."

Dental graduate Joshua Peh Jian Ren, 24, was awarded the Tun Razak Award for his academic achievement and leadership.

Having to juggle between his studies and serving as the Malaysian Dental Students' Association



Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Chancellor Yang di-Pertuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir meeting 'Anugerah Pelajaran Diraja' recipients Farahana Mohamed (second from left) and Nalina Santhiran (left) at the university's 47th convocation recently. With them is UKM vice-chancellor Professor Ir Dr Mohd Hamid Shukur (centre).



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MOHD KHAIRI ISMAIL
PhD graduate

president, Peh said he always set his priorities straight and managed his time well.

This year, UKM introduced its inaugural Doctorate Gold Award. Dr Kassim Bahali from the Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation, and Dr Abdullah Amru Indera Luthfi from the Engineering and Built Environment Faculty, had the honour of being the first recipients.

UKM vice-chancellor Professor Ir Dr Mohd Hamid Shukur said in line with UKM's stature as a research university, the Doctorate Gold Award is a recognition of excellence for its PhD graduates.

"UKM is at the 160th position in the QS World University Rankings 2020, and the 41st in QS Asia University Ranking, placing it in the top one per cent of the best universities in the world. This makes Malaysia a country of choice for higher education."

At the convocation, UKM honoured four of its former academicians — Dr Muhammad Mat Salleh, Dr Behan Yamin, Dr Tham Siew Yin and Datuk Dr Lokman Sam — with the title of professor emeritus.

The university also conferred honorary doctorates to notable figures like former Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh president Professor Michael Lavelle-Jones and former United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon.

Present at the first session were Tuanku Ampuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Aishah Bahani Tengku Besar Mahmud, UKM Pro-Chancellors Tan Sri Tun Puiteri Intan Salinas Sultan Abdul Halim and Tun Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid.



(From left) Top graduates Muhammad Aij Fitri Abdul Halim, Farahana Mohamed, Nalina Santhiran and Joshua Peh Jian Ren.