

UKM ready to face the revolution

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UNIVERSITI Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) has set up a 112-strong task force to prepare the varsity for the fourth industrial revolution, said its vice-chancellor Professor Dawid Seri Dr Noor Azlan Ghazali.

The university which was recently placed 230th on QS World University Ranking 2017/2018 had made it compulsory for students across all faculties in the upcoming intake to take up a course on data analytics. The task force, he said, was in line with the Higher Education Ministry's aspiration to accelerate the revolution.

"We want to ensure everybody is looking to it and will be able to make sense of data that they have because nobody is exempted from the revolution," he told a press conference yesterday at the university.

Noor Azlan said, heading towards Industry 4.0 (automation and data exchange trend including cyber-physical systems and the Internet of things), the ministry had called for Education 4.0.

He said Education 4.0 will adopt the approaches of Industry 4.0 to bring universities towards the fourth industrial revolution.



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NOOR AZLAN GHAZALI
UKM vice-chancellor



"One of our efforts that are in line with this aspiration is collaborating with the Higher Education Ministry and Research Triangle Institute (RTI) — a non-profit organisation from North Carolina, the United States.

There will be an international seminar in September where together with the ministry and RTI, we will unpack the concept of the fourth industrial revolution in the Malaysian context.

The ministry is still seeking for the most suitable and the latest mould for our country to progress and improve the quality of our industries as well as our human capital," he said adding that the varsity would also be focusing on a digitised economy whereby the students would be required to study entrepreneurship.

UKM's big leap in the recent QS World Ranking, Noor Azlan said, had placed it in the top 1 per cent universities in the world.

This unprecedented achievement by a 47-year-old national university of a developing country would not be possible without the numerous strategic partnerships with various bodies from public and private sectors as well as world-class universities, he said adding that last year, UKM students had formed 320 links with industry players.



Another factor that had contributed towards the successful ranking, Noor Azlan said, was the rearrangement of the faculties.

"Previously the faculties were defined according to disciplines but we have rearranged them based on issues and their scopes. Some of the issues that we are facing in the country, have been included in the grand challenge."

The current grand challenge, in which UKM researchers are focusing on, include contemporary Islam, B40 empowerment, STEM (science, technology, engineering,



and mathematics), sustainable environment, a healthy Malaysia, Asean integration and the development of the Malay intellect.

"This is another way for us to do our research, consultation and services in a more organised way. When we interact with communities in a project, we take the 250 degree model approach. We work with corporate partners who want to see real change in the target communities and we embark on the project with a team comprising various experts from the

relevant faculties. And the project is there for a few years. This way our academic work impacts the ultimate beneficiaries in what is called translational research," he said.

Asked whether budget cutbacks by the government will affect research work, Noor Azlan said society needs to chip in, too.

"The government has stepped up on many occasions, but under the current economic environment, the society — which includes industry, corporates, stakeholders and philanthropists — must play their roles, too. In developed countries, universities are important platforms to assure the continuity of development. I urge all stakeholders in Malaysia that the responsibility to fund an education does not only weigh on the shoulders of the government. We must come forward together. As a university, we want more partners to step together with. People with funds can use the university's expertise to work on problems and create impactful solutions," he said.

Noor Azlan Ghazali (second from left) with (from left) UKM deputy vice-chancellor research & innovation affairs Professor Dr Mohd Fikriwan Farman, deputy vice-chancellor (industry & community partnerships) Professor Datin Dr Noron Ho Abdulloh, deputy vice-chancellor (science & international affairs) Professor Datin Dr Hiza Aty Abdulhikmah Gh, Rahman, deputy vice-chancellor (students & alumni affairs) Professor Norah Noor Azlan Mohd Anwar and Pro-Chancellor Professor Datin Dr Mohd Marzuki Mustajir after the press conference announcing the QS World University ranking.

BY LAILI ISMAIL