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UiTM — A unique educational odyssey

SIX DECADES OF TRANSFORMATION: Even though many milestones have been achieved, Universiti Teknologi MARA's work to use education as a catalyst for Bumiputera development continues amid challenging times

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THIS year is the 60th anniversary of Universiti Teknologi MARA's unique educational odyssey which began in 1956 with the establishment of Dewan Latehan Rida to provide basic training to the educationally marginalised Bumiputera community.

Nine years later in 1965 Dewan Latehan Rida evolved into Maktab MARA. In 1967, the Maktab blossomed into Institut Teknologi MARA. ITM, as it was popularly known, became the nucleus, the hub and the catalyst for Bumiputera education in the country.

Our mission was to be part of a national policy of social engineering and social restructuring; reach out to the historically marginalised sections of society; and give them opportunities for upward mobility. That mission remains the *raison d'être* of our existence today.

Under the dynamic and visionary leadership of Tan Sri Arshad Ayub, ITM soon spread its wings to every state of the federation. It pioneered multi-tiered pre-university and diploma programmes, drafted innovative courses and curricula, and embraced many prestigious, external, professional programmes such as Bachelor of Laws (London), the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators and Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). Decades before other institutions embraced the initiative, ITM launched twinning programmes with American universities. It also set up branch campuses in rural areas to remedy the rural-urban gap in education. In time, ITM became the largest institution of

tertiary education in the country.

The nation took note of the creative fervour at ITM and in 1999 an Act of Parliament upgraded ITM into a full-fledged university with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as UiTM chancellor.

Though much has changed since 1999, UiTM is, and will remain, part of an ambitious, affirmative action quest to use education as a tool of social engineering and as a catalyst for Bumiputera development. With great satisfaction we note that from 1958 to April 2016, UiTM and its predecessors have produced 661,456 graduates for the professions and the industry.

Of the 661,456 graduates, 408,520 or 61.7 per cent are women. Such a large proportion of women graduates is bound to have significant implications for female emancipation and upward mobility into the professions.

Among the professionals UiTM has produced are engineers (21,420); accountants (58,118); dentists (746); scientists (25,805); programmers and mathematicians (27,367); architects and planners (26,993); lawyers (7,060); pharmacists (2,457) and doctors (1,077).

Many UiTM academicians have made a name for themselves nationally and internationally. They are visiting professors in American, European and Australian universities. They are consulted on the drawing up of national constitutions and flood mitigation projects. UiTM Faculty of Electrical Engineering senior lecturer, Dr Mohamad Huzaimy Jusoh, was the team leader for eight researchers from six local universities who were involved in a scientific research expedition to the Antarctica.

Wan Nazri Wan Aria helped to design the upper level of Mecca's iconic Abraj Al-Bait clock tower. Norliana Mohd Abbas was among 14 national researchers who received Malay-

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sia's Rising Star Award for attaining the top one per cent of Highly Cited Papers published worldwide.

UiTM law students Mohd Mifzal Mohd Murshid Kieron and Jasmine Ho Abdullah emerged champions in one of the world's most competitive debating tournaments, the Cambridge Intervarsity debating competition. Nurul Nabilah Abdul Jalil clinched sixth place in the world and the national top spot in the June 2016 ACCA Paper on Corporate Reporting.

Siti Aisah Kamarulzaman emerged as the best graduate of ACCA in Malaysia and the seventh best in the world for the June 2013 examination.

Zulfadli Zulkiffli, a student from Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, won his second career title after beating Siril Verma of India in the men's singles final at the Russian Open Grand Prix in Vladivostok. Siti Husnaa Hassan was runner-up at the Asean 2016 Quran Recitation competition in Bangkok.

Staff and student excellence is on the rise. But the national quest for eradicating the identification of race with profession has, however, not yet been achieved. Bumiputeras are still under-represented in many professions such as accountancy and medicine. Therefore, UiTM's work to use education to transform the socio-economic status of Malays and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak must continue with vigour and imagination. It must be observed that UiTM's social engineering role is a journey, not a destination.

To add to our role in social restructuring, there are many emerging challenges due to higher education everywhere standing on the cusp of change. A creative fervour engulfs tertiary education and we are forced to ask ourselves where we stand and where we ought to go as part of the higher education scene in the country and in a globalised world.

The aims of a university are multifarious. The university is a storehouse of the knowledge and wisdom of the past as well as a citadel where new knowledge is generated. The traditional university was centred on teaching. Now we wish to be immersed in applied research and innovation as well as contribute to the nation's economic and industrial development.

We train students to learn as well as to earn. As well as enriching the mind and soul, we impart an education that has utility. We build careers as well as characters. We are deeply concerned about the core ethical, moral and

concerned about the core ethical, moral and social values that we should engender in our students and staff.

We attempt to keep our curricula in tune with emerging needs and demands of the professions and the industry. We seek to foster a **culture of research and innovation without sacrificing traditional teaching.**

We seek to straddle the divide between profession-centred and specialised training and an education that is holistic and liberal. We try to guard against over-specialisation so that students are trained for multi-tasking and multi-disciplinary approaches and are able to adapt to different challenges at work.

Our endeavour is to teach and inspire students to think, articulate and be independent. As a premier Third World institution, we impart national and Third World perspectives and at the same time inculcate awareness of a globalised world. Internationalisation and the inculcation of a globalised mind are our emerging challenges.

We are seeking to develop a more sophisticated, multi-dimensional and holistic admission-criteria for our students. We constantly seek to do more to balance the urban-rural representation. We are slowly changing the student profile by admitting more adults in continuing education and adult literacy programmes. We continuously train and exhort our staff to keep abreast of the march of the times and the expanding horizons of knowledge.

Our instructional methodologies are shifting towards a more democratic, participative and interactive systems. Blended learning has been introduced. Our testing and evaluation methods are moving away from traditional modalities and adopting and adapting to the technical and information age.

The university has ambitious plans to involve its alumni in the establishment of endowments and *wakaf*. It plans to generate income from research, consultancy and intellectual property. Its impressive assets in land need to be utilised.

At the same time, expenditure has to be reduced. Support staff may have to be cut down as mechanisation takes over. More and more students will have to be self-financing. Banks and the industry will be invited to step in to finance higher education on pay-back loans.

As with other universities of the future, **UiTM will have to develop a business model and run like a business even though, as a uni-**

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versity, it is primarily not a business entity. Given its size and the magnitude of its mission, it has to manage costs sustainably. It has to use its assets more efficiently. It has to partner closely with the industry. It has to encourage academics to promote enterprise.

Obviously, many challenges and opportunities stare us in the face. Our multiple roles as citadels of learning and earning, teaching and research, imparters of morality and designers of utility clash and compete with each other. No role can be ignored. Priorities may vary from age to age but an overall balance is what we seek.

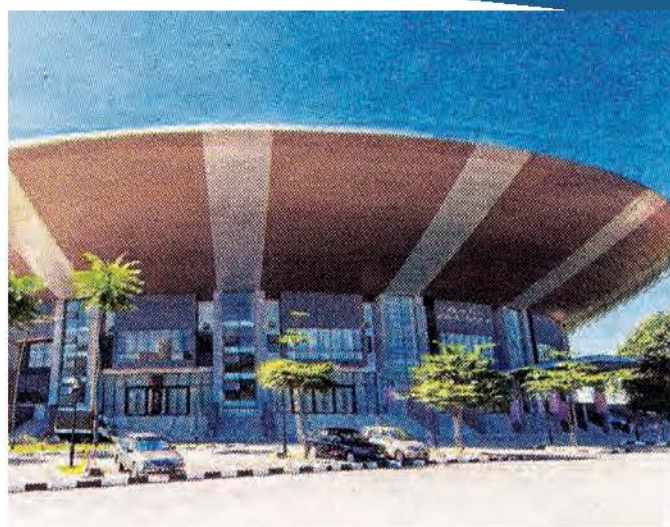
As Universiti Teknologi MARA stands on the threshold of its seventh decade, we are proud that many milestones have been achieved. But there are challenges ahead that need to be transformed to opportunities. There are dares that need to be converted to doors for the continuing odyssey ahead.

The writer is a Professor Emeritus and vice chancellor of UiTM





As UiTM vice chancellor, Professor Emeritus **Datuk Dr Hassan Said** (centre) strives to help the university maintain an **overall balance** in its roles.



Tun Abdul Razak (second from left) reciting a prayer at the laying of the foundation stone ceremony at Rida headquarters building in Kuala Lumpur on June 6, 1965.

- **Penasihat**

Profesor Emeritus Dato' Dr Hassan Said
Naib Canselor

- **Ketua Projek**

Alfina Bakar

- **Pengurus Produksi**

Darus Kasim
Rosly Mahmud

- **Penyelaras Bahan Akhbar**

Firdaus Abd Hanan
Hanisah Yacob
Datin Umminalah Salleh

- **Pembantu**

Penyelaras Bahan Akhbar

Hazizi Jantan
Nor Azlina Nordin
Samsinah Selamat
Raja Nazrul Raja Hisham

- **Pereka Grafik Utama**

Junaidy Talib

- **Pereka Grafik**

Rosdi Abdul Hamid
Mohd Nor Firdaus Mohd Isa

- **Sumber Keratan Akhbar**

Utusan Malaysia, Mingguan Malaysia, Berita Harian, Berita Minggu,
New Straits Times, The Star, Sunday Star, The Sun, Star Metro,
Kosmo, Harian Metro, Sinar Harian.

