

UMS to implement deficit-prevention strategies

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KOTA KINABALU: Public universities in Malaysia cannot be overly dependent on funding from the central government, said Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah.

Harun said the burden shouldered by the government was too heavy, particularly with the current unhealthy economic situation. Universities in developed countries in Europe, Australia, Taiwan and Japan, were independent and able to move forward, he said.

He added that the bulk of such universities' funding was generated by the institutions themselves and that they received minimal assistance from the government.

"Nevertheless, the universities were renowned in the academic world and were able to generate sustainable income themselves," he said when addressing UMS students yesterday.

Harun said UMS aimed to excel in the fields of aquaculture and



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agriculture.

He also said natural resources and their potential must be expanded so that their benefits could be fully derived not only as teaching materials for students and research for researchers.

"They should be expanded as industries capable of generating income for the university," he said.

Aside from generating income, the industries created will become platforms and training labs

for students who will have the opportunity to be in a business industry ecosystem.

"I hope the transformation will be able to break the stigma that this institution is merely academic in nature," he said.

The vice chancellor added that the impact would be able to change the mindset of the community and raise the people's quality of life.

Harun also stressed the need for prudent spending at the university.

"MOHE (Ministry of Higher Education) has approved a budget of RM351 million for 2016, inclusive of RM35 million from UMS internal sources," he said.

He said the government's allocation of RM316 million for administration was 17 percent or RM64 million less than the amount allocated in 2015.

"Taking into consideration costs including monetary incentives and annual salary increments for staff, UMS estimates a total of RM99

million (including the agreed RM35 million) that has to be sourced from within the university itself," he said.

Among the deficit-prevention strategies that must and will be implemented this year include increasing income generation activities of internal sources with the key performance index set at least 15 percent of the administrative allocation; enhancing efficiency in the usage of available resources, implementing austerity programmes, preventing wastage through the optimisation of asset utilisation, maximising returns from existing resources, and re-examining binding university contracts for the purpose of 'value for money', he said.

On international students intake, Harun said UMS was expecting the arrival of 20 students from Timor-Leste this month.

There are currently 682 international students enrolled at UMS.