

All universities and not just UMS

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Mary Chin

KOTA KINABALU: Datuk Dr Mary Yap Kain Ching (pic) said Tuesday she was appointed Deputy Minister of Higher Education for Malaysia and not for Sabah.



"I wish to instil this awareness in Inanam Assemblyman Dr Roland Chia and the public. For more than 30 years, I have served our nation in different capacities without fear or favour. I would like to reiterate that education should not be politicised as this would derail the focus on educational development of our country," she said, when contacted.

Dr Yap said following the launching of the Pelan Strategik Pengajian Tinggi Negara (PSPPTN) on January 13, 2004, it was found that the public universities were over-dependent on the Government allocation.

"This issue is being addressed in the 5th Shift of the Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) (2015-2025)," she said, insisting that the 8.52pc of the budget cut for 2017 is in line with the strategies and action plans in PPPM.

Dr Yap, who is MP for Tawau, made it clear that all the public universities in the

country had their allocation of funds reduced accordingly, so it is not only Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) that had its allocation diminished.

She was responding to Dr Chia who said he was disheartened that UMS had to undergo a 28pc budget cut from the RM315 million the Federal Government made this year.

He had also said this is especially disappointing when the Higher Education Deputy Minister, Datuk Dr Mary Yap, is a Sabahan, saying she owes fellow Sabahans an explanation for the cut.

On the reduction of the 2017 budget for the public universities, she stressed that self-financial sustainability of these universities has been an agenda in the Education Blueprint called Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (Pendidikan Tinggi) (2015-2025) which is in line with the structural reforms advocated by the government.

"This is clearly stated in the 5th Shift of the Blueprint which focuses on the initiatives of the public universities to generate income for their operations. These commendable initiatives are based on research findings that the heavy dependence on the government allocation at 70 to 90pc is not going to be sustainable," she pointed out. According to Dr Yap, the findings also revealed that

other countries like Thailand received only 30-40pc, while Korea received only 50pc of funds from the government.

This, she said, implies that public universities have the intellectual strength and competence to generate income to support the management of the universities.

"In view of that, our own public universities have been playing their respective roles to ensure that the reduction of funds does not adversely affect their operations," she noted.

Their initiatives, Dr Yap said, include getting income from professional services like consultancies, organising conferences, seminars and workshops in the respective fields of expertise, commercialisation of ideas and products, and post graduate (Research and Development or R&D) fee charges.

R&D grants also come in the form of private grants, international grants and public funds from government agencies.

Going by the success of the educational initiatives in generating income for the universities, Dr Yap expressed optimism that these pragmatic efforts will continue to be undertaken by our public universities in facing the challenge of a budget cut for 2017. "In addition, the universities have also unlocked their existing assets through publication of their researches in journals."

Success stories of R&D in UMS for 2015-2016

IN the context of UMS, Dr Yap said despite the budget curtailment in 2016, the institution under the capable leadership of Vice-Chancellor, Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah had lucidly demonstrated that it is truly capable of offsetting the challenge of a budget reduction in 2016 with success stories in the field of research and development (R&D).

Dr Yap recalled the success stories of R&D in UMS for the 2015-2016 period, saying the university's accomplishments have helped to generate income to support the university's operations. Some examples are as follows:

● UMS sees breakthrough in grouper aquaculture (Published in *Daily Express*, March 5, 2016).

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has scored a breakthrough in grouper aquaculture with the production of a first-in-the-world Closed Cycle of Tiger Grouper (TGGG) and Giant Grouper Hybrid. The hybrid has many attributes which include fast growth, higher resilience to environmental variations, better disease resistance and excellent organoleptic quality.

● UMS researchers decode DNA of pineapple genome (Published in *Daily Express* on July 14, 2016). Universiti Malaysia

Sabah's Biotechnology Research Institute (BRI) have succeeded in cracking the genetic code of both the internationally renowned MD-2 Pineapple and the local Babagon variety. With the completion of the genome, it is now possible to further improve the agronomic traits of the crop.

● Mangrove crab success for the UMS (Published in *Daily Express* on August 27, 2016).

UMS Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI) Shrimp Hatchery successfully produced crablets of mangrove crab species in captivity. The species, *Scylla tranquebarica*, is the dominant species in Sabah and commonly sold at local markets and seafood restaurants. This discovery is very significant in helping our aquaculture industry to grow.

● UMS successfully licensed LAMB Biomass Dryer to a local company at a one-off licencing fee of RM84,800.00 for five years, and each year, UMS will receive a guaranteed minimum royalty of RM20,000 annually for five years. This dryer facilitates fast drying of paddy, thus improving the quality of grains and reducing the loss of local farmers due to spoilage of grains.