

# VC outlines 5 agendas for UMS staff, students

27/10/2011/DE/13

## Durie Rainer Fong

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice-Chancellor, Prof Datuk Seri Dr Kamaruzaman Ampon outlined five agendas in his keynote address to the staff and students, Wednesday, calling them to make the varsity one of the benchmarks of the nation's progress and excellence.

The agendas are putting academicians in the right pedestal, to improve the university's capabilities and position, incorporate quality research and innovation, improving student potential and marketability and, elevating individual and work quality.

In the first agenda, Kamaruzaman, among others, challenged academicians to never stop gaining knowledge, pointing out UMS does not want to be filled with profesor kangkung (professors with limited knowledge) and instead seek new knowledge by reading and writing more especially journals or books.

He urged UMS academicians to double their efforts to come up with journals and books, pointing out the Key Performance Index (KPI) for publication among UMS staff has yet to reach its target.

Kamaruzaman said that in order to be scholars with calibre, academicians should also not be afraid to speak up and view their thoughts and criticism, pointing out a university should be where all ideas and opinions could be debated intellectually and openly.

"To solidify the culture of excellence in knowledge among academicians, UMS also encourages this group to follow temporary attachment programmes with government departments, to undergo short-term training locally or overseas and also take part in sabbaticals," he said, adding there are only 14 UMS staff involved in industry training locally or overseas.

On efforts to produce more academicians, the varsity always looked forward towards recruiting new workforce and also sending them to pursue doctorate degrees.

"In 2010 alone, UMS welcomed home many of these candidates who achieved their degrees. Now we have 286 staff with PhDs in their respective fields, making it 34 per cent of the UMS teaching staff with such degrees," he said, his address also broadcast live to UMS Labuan Campus (UMSKAL)

through a video conference.

The Vice-Chancellor also promised to solve the issue of promotion, with many dissatisfied with the criteria set in the current system.

"Starting this year, hopefully the business of promotion can be done twice a year and the university will appoint those who fulfill the qualification requirement," he said.

On improving the university's capabilities and position, Kamaruzaman said UMS could showcase the strength of its niche areas such as courses in Advanced Engineering, Islamic Banking and Finance, and Hospitality and Tourism, through an accreditation system by the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA).

Several development projects such as upgrading infrastructure and ICT facilities in UMSKAL would also be completed the latest by the end of 2012, he added.

The university could also count itself lucky to be strategically located in the middle of the archipelago and Bornean island, which possessed an abundance of resources that have yet to be explored.

The niche area could propel UMS to be a subject of reference and respect not only in the country but also internationally, he said, adding UMS' Borneo Marine Research Institute, Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation and Biotechnology Research Institute have worked with agencies and bodies from overseas.

"UMS reached its KPI on the quantity and quality of research in 2010, with almost RM9.5 million channeled to 129 research projects," Kamaruzaman said, adding the researchers obtained their grants from Fundamental Research Grant Scheme, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation's Sciencefund and Seedmoney scheme.

The university also gained national and international recognition having joined research exhibitions, he said, adding UMS has so far earned 100 awards, 17 of them gold, 38 silver and the rest bronze.

Of the total, 18 were international awards with the rest won at national-level competitions, he added.

Meanwhile, in order to raise the potential and marketability of students, he said a strong grasp of the English language was important, and at the same time urged students to be more engrossed in public speaking, lamenting that his call for such in his last address had been relatively ignored.

"I hope the available spaces at every school, college residences, library and near lecture halls will be utilised for this activity...don't just leave it to the debate teams."

As many organisations have adopted these days, Kamaruzaman called on the UMS community to go green.

"As humans, we sometimes become complacent and waste our resources...for your information, we spend RM1.2 million a month on utility costs. Prudence doesn't incur any cost but only a change in attitude in everyone of us," he said.



Kamaruzaman (in army uniform) greeting the people after delivering his address.