



UNIVERSITI SAINS ISLAM MALAYSIA  
جامعة العلوم الإسلامية الماليزية  
ISLAMIC SCIENCE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA

Centre for Strategic Development & Corporate Relations  
Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM),  
Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia  
Tel : 06-798 6002 / 8026 Fax : 06-798 8041

## USIM'S GARDEN OF INTELLECT INFRA FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Chairman of USIM's Board of Directors, Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Mohamad Yusof Hj. Md. Noor spoke with Siti Maizatul Akmar Ismail and Dr. Sapora Sipon of the Corporate Relations Office about the National Higher Education Strategic Plan and USIM's achievements and performance. He also spoke about his plans and expectations from USIM.

### Biodata

Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Mohamad Yusof Hj. Md. Noor stands as an outstanding example not only in Malaysia but also in many Islamic countries. He obtained his doctoral degree from the University of Cairo and served as Deputy Vice Chancellor of UKM (1980-1984). In politics, he had an outstanding career. He had served as a Minister in the Prime Minister's Department and also as the Minister of Public Enterprises. At present, he is the Chairman of FELDA, Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Malaysia and Majlis Penasihat Tabung Haji.

**Q: What is your view of Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia's focus on establishing itself as a Centre of Islamic Excellence?**

A: As a new university, USIM's focus on establishing itself as a Centre of Islamic Excellence can be realized through research. In future, USIM plans to have 45% of its student population comprise those pursuing postgraduate master and PhD degrees. We hope this can be achieved, as it is in line with the aspiration of our government to establish excellence in our universities. However, we will also accommodate current needs in preparing students for the job market with our undergraduate programmes. What makes a university a centre of excellence is always the element of research. Definitely, research is mostly conducted at the postgraduate level. As such, USIM's priority is to enhance its postgraduate programmes. Besides maintaining the undergraduate programmes as the 'common areas,' we will pay more attention to research at the postgraduate stage. With the presence of foreign students doing postgraduate programs, we have already positioned USIM at par with other established universities, both local and foreign.

Our focus is no longer on undergraduate courses alone. We want to turn USIM into a university of excellence in all fields, especially at the postgraduate level. One of our strategies is to send our excellent students to further their studies abroad and attract foreign students to undertake their postgraduate courses here. Although other local universities accept foreign students for undergraduate courses, USIM will not participate in the race to take foreign students at the undergraduate level.

Instead, we will endeavor to become the first university in Malaysia to become the centre of postgraduate studies for foreign students. That is also the main reason why we plan to

build The Garden of Knowledge or *Bustanul Ariffin* on campus. *Bustanul Ariffin*, planned especially for postgraduate students, consists of a special residential area that will be equipped with exclusive academic facilities. It is something very unique as there are no other universities which have plans to build an intellectual village where the landscape is given special attention. My wish is that *Bustanul Ariffin* or the Garden of Intellectuals will become symbolic of the aspirations of USIM in our quest for excellence, especially in postgraduate programmes.

USIM's lecturers might be offered work in universities outside Malaysia. At present, we witness the presence of many foreign lecturers in our country. In future, we hope to see our lecturers getting the opportunity to work in other countries, based on the academic staff exchange scheme. Only then we deserve to be known as an 'international' University. The staff exchange scheme can be successful if we uphold the field of research. Currently, it can be seen that a university without research cannot excel. Whether we are aware of it or not, in order to become an excellent university, one that outshines others, the emphasis on research is very significant.

**Q: What are your views on human capital and on the National Higher Education Strategic Plan?**

A: I have already studied the Strategic Plan. It is a contemporary strategic plan and in accordance with the current situation. This Strategic Plan cannot be viewed from the perspective of individual or group interest alone. This plan goes beyond the interest of any single individual or group. When viewed from the perspective of the individual, some may not agree with the plan. However, based on studies, the Ministry of Higher Education is not obliged to provide services to any particular individual nor any particular group. Therefore, I feel that this plan is very suitable, and this includes the plan to give autonomy to universities. All these are appropriate.

The Strategic Plan is definitely related to human capital. Therefore, if we wish to implement it, in my opinion the role of the universities in implementing the Strategic Plan is very significant because the Plan is general and the universities' administrations must adopt it according to their respective capacities. The research carried out must emphasize matters that can raise the quality of human capital. The students' human capital is still not fully developed. USIM will use all its strength to produce students who are prepared to meet all future challenges. Our role is to make sure the students that we produce are able to deal with any types of challenges. Only then will they have fully developed their human capital and be able to play a positive role in society. Thus, the question whether we are able to fully develop and utilize human capital is answered.

In the effort to implement the aspiration to harness human capital, I am confident the University's Students Affairs Division can play its role to develop the students' talents and skills. The role of the Students Affairs Division is very significant in the development of human capital.

**Q: Are you satisfied with the performance of USIM at present?**

A: USIM has done fairly well compared to some universities within the same period of the first few years of their establishment. For example, USIM has been able to attract students from the Middle East. USIM has also been successful in attracting foreign universities to work closely for the betterment of both parties. This is definitely a success for USIM. I do not deny that there are weaknesses, particularly in terms of limited facilities. As for recognition from foreign universities, in the first five years we have advanced more than some other universities within their first five years of operation. The response of the society towards the achievement of USIM students is also very encouraging. Although USIM is still relatively young, many doors are open to USIM students in terms of job placement. Thus, in the aspect

of producing students that are accepted by society, we are successful because in a very short period of time we are already being recognized by foreign universities.

Another triumph achieved by USIM is in the area of publications. We are still new, but in terms of our publications, we have far outnumbered and surpassed - within the same period of time - the publications of some other universities. In my view, this success is due to our experienced lecturers. The strength of USIM lies mainly in our experienced educators. I can say that due to this, despite its young age, the university is at par with other universities in terms of its academic performance.

**Q: What are Tan Sri's expectations from USIM?**

A: My expectation is to see at least 45% students or more enrolled in the postgraduate programs in all fields, to be realized as soon as possible with the existence of the Garden of Intellectuals. The concept of *Bustanul Ariffin* has already been accepted. It is now in the process of implementation.

I would also like to see USIM students to possess outstanding characteristics, manifested not only by their appearance - such as how they dress - but also by how they communicate, act and interact. In my opinion, particularly the female students should have suitable attire, designed especially for the campus. This is to give them a new image as well as to allow them to move around easily. For example, the Muslim attire in Pakistan can be taken as a guide. This can add value to the students' character and indirectly help form an image of the students of USIM. These are my expectations and I hope they can be realized in order to distinguish USIM as an outstanding university.



Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Mohamad Yusof Hj. Md. Noor

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