

Directions for Asia-Pacific higher education

THE 12th QS-Asia-Pacific Professional Leaders in Education Conference And Exhibition (APPLE) at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre ended on a high note on Thursday as academicians from all over the world discussed the way forward for uplifting tertiary education standards.

Organised together by Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMap) and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asia, the event featured the popular QS Squared Debates, other than the perennial favourite of universities such as the QS Rankings workshops and right down to the lively panel discussions and parallel sessions that are relevant to the Asian context.

The conference also provided numerous networking opportunities to help academics create new links and partnerships with institutions all over the world.

QS Asia is the regional subsidiary of QS, producers of the QS



World University Rankings as well as various regional and subject rankings.

In his foreword, UniMAP vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Zul Azhar Zahid Jamal said the event provided great potential for fostering innovative opportunities towards enhancing higher educa-

tion excellence.

"This year's conference focused on new directions in Asia-Pacific higher education, and covered a large spectrum of issues and challenges related to this theme. I'm extremely proud that Malaysia was selected as the host country for the conference," he said.

In the *Bernama* report from the opening ceremony, the Raja Muda of Perlis, Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail (pic) said higher education must evolve to improve its global competitiveness in the face of new technologies in various fields.

Creating a quality higher education which meets current and future needs form the major challenges of the higher education sector," said Tuanku Syed Faizuddin, who is also UniMAP chancellor.

Tuanku Syed Faizuddin is convinced that future job sectors would require a high degree of mastery of new technologies.

"According to Jeff Weiner, the

chief executive officer of LinkedIn, more than five million jobs will be replaced by new technologies by 2020," he added.

Tuanku Syed Faizuddin said at the same time, new jobs are expected to be created in the fields of data flow, actuaries, and anthropological systems.

He expressed hoped QS APPLE could provide a suitable platform for higher education systems to exchange ideas, develop networks and explore new opportunities.

The 664 participants at the three-day event included university vice-chancellors and presidents, policy-makers, academicians, researchers and administrators from 140 institutions in 31 countries.

For Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU), participating in the conference served a two-fold interest. First, it wanted to learn and network with regional peers, being a "young" university.

"We are only 25 years old," said Prof Er Meng Hwa, NTU's vice-president for international affairs, who represented NTU president Prof Bertil Andersson.

"We came to learn from others, and at the same time share how we strived for academic and research excellence.

"I spoke on how NTU developed over the last ten years, after we became autonomous in 2006, and on the various challenges we faced, even in the face of strong government support," he added.

The Singapore Management University, was the other varsity from the republic which was also a sponsor at the event.

Universiti Malaya was honoured with a gold medal for Best International Website Page (study.um.edu.my) in the QS-APPLE Creative Awards, a category created to recognise the importance of compelling designs in effective communication and brand building. - By MENG YEW CHOONG