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USM VC ATTENDS COUNCIL MEETING FOR THE PROMOTION OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN TECHNOLOGY, TOKYO, JAPAN



USM, PENANG, 28 February 2017 – Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Vice-Chancellor, Professor Datuk Dr. Asma Ismail attended the 4th Council Meeting for the Promotion of Education and Research in Technology in Tokyo, Japan on 23 February 2017.

This is a Tri-Institutional Collaborative Educational Reform Project by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan aimed at laying out an educational programme to foster globalised, practical yet innovative Japanese engineers for the country.

Asma was given the honour of being the only non-Japanese member in the council, which comprises of 8 prominent individuals representing various stakeholders; the ministry, corporate leaders, and academicians which include the Nobel Laureate recipient, Prof. Makoto Kobayashi, President of Tokyo

Institute of Technology, Dr. Yoshinao Mishima and Chairman of the Board of Toyota Motor Kyushu, Inc., Mr. Iwao Nihashi.

Other members include Senior Research Fellow of Mitsubishi Research Institute, Inc., Dr. Yoshihiro Oishi; Specially-Appointed Professor for Meiji Institute for Global Affairs, Prof. Yoriko Kawaguchi; President of Toyota Technological Institute, Dr. Hiroyuki Sakaki, and Auditor of Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology, Yuko Maeda.

Dr. Mishima was elected as the new chair of this council.



This programme was specially designed by MEXT, Japan for the nation's three prestigious institutions - Nagaoka University of Technology (NUT), National Institute of Technology (KOSEN) and Toyohashi University of Technology (TUT) - to work together to foster the training and education of the Japanese engineers to be competitive in the globalised world.

Among the objectives of the programme was also to churn practical and creative engineers to underpin the design and manufacturing industries of Japan.

Through this programme, MEXT hopes to produce "Globally-Engaged, Practical and Innovative Engineers" in order to ensure that successful operations would drive Japanese companies located overseas to become competitive in this globalised era.

Asma applauded the three institutions for collaborating closely to develop innovative and global programmes to produce engineering graduates who can meet the growing challenging industrial demands for the future.

However, to further complement the existing programme and to face the 4th Industrial Revolution, Asma suggested on the introduction of the element of experiential learning via community engagement through the quadruple helix (academic-industry-government-society) collaboration that Malaysia and especially USM is currently adopting for the Malaysian higher education sector.

She further stated, "One cannot be practical if you do not touch base with the people and know their culture and their needs, and one also cannot be innovative if you do not truly provide the practical solution that society hopes for."

Asma added, "USM can assist its strategic partners by becoming the gateway to Asia-Pacific countries and beyond, through the Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN) in which USM is currently heading and also as the founding member, with a membership of 86 institutions from 19 countries across the world."

She was delighted that her idea has been well-received by the council members and delegates of the 3 institutions, with many requesting for collaboration.

The council members also raised some concerns, which include the reasons why many students are not going to Japan to study. On this, Asma's suggestion for the Japanese universities to address the quality reference framework as soon as possible was well-received.

The meeting ended with the toast for the successful collaboration and performance by the 3 institutions, since 2017 will be the final year of the collaborative project.

This meeting showed that USM was chosen as a preferred partner due to its strategic location in Penang that housed more than 50 Japanese companies and multinationals, and also its reputation as one of the five Research Universities and the only APEX university in Malaysia, making USM the obvious choice for the Japanese institutions to collaborate.

Strategies on increasing the number of Japanese students to be sent to Penang and USM are underway, with the potential of including community engagement programmes in the curricular.

Photos: Professor Dr. Lee Keat Teong



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