

Steward of resources

Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Article

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Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) has recently been designated as one of seven Regional Centres of Expertise by the United Nations University for its pioneering efforts to spearhead ideas for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

USM Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dzul kifli Abd Razak says the university has specifically been recognised as this year is marked by the United Nations as the beginning of the decade of BSD.

"The focus is not about education in the context of just teaching students about ESD but more towards the need for doing something, making it work and applying ideas on sustainable development," Dzul kifli says.

LUSH: USM University in a Garden makes a conducive environment for studies.

"USM has long done substantial work towards translating the idea of sustainable development into something positive beginning with the implementation of the Kampus Sejahtera Programme (which can be roughly translated as Healthy Campus)."

The programme, which was started in 2001, aimed at empowering USM student and staff to take charge of the development of the institution.

"It means that if there is anything not right with the university, or where anything can be improved, USM staff and students can form committees to tackle the problems."

LEAFY SURROUNDINGS: University in a Garden is one of the primary factors why USM was recognised as a Regional Centre of Expertise

"We have documented at least 15 projects which have proven beneficial to the university. They cover a wide range of topics, such as food, transportation, accommodation and security."

He says documentation has already been translated into monographs.

University in a Garden, one of the projects, is one of the primary factors why USM was recognised as a Regional Centre of Expertise.

"The distinctive concept of the project delineates interlinkages between the roles and functions of an institution of higher education within a garden environment," says Dzul kifli.

USM is making every effort to inculcate the spirit and practices of nature conservation among the campus community.

"In doing so, we have relied almost entirely on resources and assets on the campus.

DZULKIFLI: 'We have relied almost entirely on resources and assets on the campus'.

"This is consistent with sustainable development ideals to reduce waste and to be more efficient in the use of resources," he says.

Dzul kifli highlights another USM showcase, which he says is timely, considering the worldwide petroleum price increase.

The project, named Catalytic Process for Production of Biofuel from Palm Oil, is based on using natural renewable resources as raw materials to obtain alternative fuel in the light of depleting crude oil resources.

Liquid fuel produced from-palm oil, which is categorised into gasoline, kerosene and diesel fraction, is sulphur and nitrogen-free. Hence, it does not contribute to the greenhouse effect and is eco-friendly.

"Besides, the quality of the gasoline produced is comparable with commercial gasoline."

Another project, EcoPalm Paper™ — An Environmentally Friendly Quality Paper from Oil Palm Bio-mass, aims to help Malaysia reduce paper and paper products imports worth an estimated US\$1 billion (RM3.8 billion) annually.

To help reduce foreign exchange outflow, it is important that Malaysia produces its pulp and paper from

indigenous raw material. It already produces about 30 million tonnes of empty palm oil fruit bunches, a by-product of the oil palm industry.

The USM invention has devised a way to treat the empty fruit bunches to produce EcoPalm Paper™ that surpasses even those made from hard woods.

Furthermore, the paper is economically and efficiently produced besides being ecologically harmless.

Concerns for sustainable development had already been raised by the Rio Declaration at the World Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. It states that people are entitled to healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature.

This aspiration was further developed by the Johannesburg Declaration at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

It expresses the commitment of world leaders to form a humane, equitable and caring global society cognisant of the need for human dignity for all.

The other Regional Centres of Expertise are in Canada, Europe, Japan and the Pacific Islands.

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