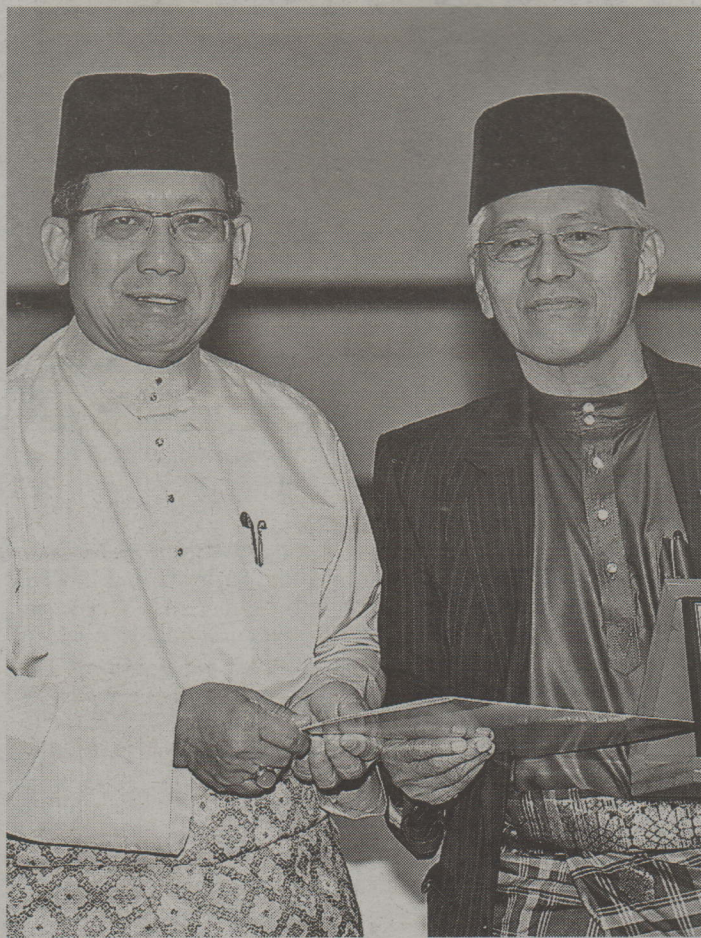


Minister of Education Pehin Orang Kaya Indera Pahlawan Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Suyoi bin Haji Osman with senior officials and award recipients



Minister of Education presenting an award to Professor Dr Mahayuddin Yahya

UNISSA celebrates 10 years of progress

| SYAZWANI HJ ROSLI |

UNIVERSITI Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) celebrated its 10th anniversary yesterday, with a thanksgiving ceremony held at its auditorium.

Present as the guest of honour was Minister of Education Pehin Orang Kaya Indera Pahlawan Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Suyoi bin Haji Osman in his capacity as the chairman of UNISSA Council.

The event began with a mass recital of Surah Yaasiin, followed by a thanksgiving prayer.

The Rector of UNISSA, Dr Haji Norarfan bin Haji Zainal, highlighted some of the university's developments over the past decade in his welcoming remarks.

"Among the developments is the annual increase in student enrolment by 17 per cent," he said.

"In addition, a total of 30 academic

programmes covering the topics of Usuluddin, Syariah, Laws, Arabic Language, Islamic Civilisation, Tahfiz and Qira'at, Entrepreneurship and Islamic Finance, are now being proffered compared to only 10 programmes a decade ago.

"Insha Allah, by 2025, more academic programmes will be proffered, according to current needs and demands. This will include programmes in Islamic Management and Leadership, the Halal Industry, Communication and other programmes in support of the Brunei Vision 2035."

Dr Haji Norarfan added that UNISSA also offers five-year Bachelor of Law and Bachelor of Syariah courses, as part of efforts to provide a significant contribution to the implementation of the Syariah Penal Code Order 2013.

"With progress being achieved in the academic quarter, UNISSA is also very committed to expanding its faculty and centre of academic excellence," he said.

"Starting with only four faculties and three centres in 2007, UNISSA now has five faculties and two centres for academic excellence. The expansion has also witnessed the establishment of the university's seven academic management and administration departments.

"Currently, UNISSA is planning to establish a Centre of Excellence for Halal Research in an effort to help the government in realising its vision towards developing Brunei Darussalam into a global Halal hub, while also upholding the titah of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanah Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam during the recent 6th Hafl Al-Takharruj."

Dr Haji Norarfan then described the role of the Mazhab Shafi'i Research Centre (PPMS) as a major highlight in the university's development.

"It plays an important role in preserving and strengthening the Shafi'i school of thought as the core belief of the Brunei Muslim community, which is in line with the Brunei Constitution of 1959 that Islam is the country's official

religion, based on Sunni principles according to the Shafi'e school," he said.

He added that the centre now offers postgraduate programmes, including Master's and PhD courses, in line with the aspirations of His Majesty to see the centre develop into a regional and international study and research hub on Shafi'e jurisprudence.

In terms of graduates, Dr Haji Norarfan said that UNISSA has managed to generate a total of 908 graduates - 12 PhD graduates, 192 Master's degree graduates and 488 degree holders - so far.

"In ensuring the quality of the academic staff, UNISSA has set its Key Performance Indicators (KPI) in reference to KPI-implemented international Islamic universities," he said, adding that such measures were adopted to guarantee their academic staff was well trained and qualified.

On the subject of research, Dr Haji Norarfan said that UNISSA has provided grants to the academic staff to conduct more studies for the benefit of the country's socio-religious development.

"UNISSA's determination in expanding literature and enriching Islamic knowledge was also evident with the establishment of the Research and Publication Centre (PPP)," he said.

"Up to 2016, UNISSA managed to publish 121 books in various fields and languages which became reference materials for students, academicians and the general public."

Since its establishment as an Islamic higher institution, UNISSA has become an alternative choice for regional and international students to pursue their education. About 10 per cent of the students in UNISSA come from an international background.

"Currently, UNISSA has become a centre of education for a total of 162 international students from 32 countries," Dr Haji Norarfan said.

The ceremony also witnessed the presentation of special awards to a total of 10 academic and support staff for their excellent work record.

The event ended with a recitation of Doa Selamat.

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