Academic

UMPSA Vice-Chancellor calls for new approaches to higher education at CTEF Symposium 2026

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PUTRAJAYA, 29 October 2026 – Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA) Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ts. Dr. Yatimah Alias, emphasised the need for universities to move beyond traditional approaches to education, internationalisation and institutional partnerships at the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF) Symposium 2026, held at Zenith Hotel Putrajaya.



The symposium, themed ‘Tertiary Education Development in the Commonwealth: Excellence, Mobility and Partnership’, brought together higher education leaders, policymakers and academics to discuss emerging trends, shared challenges and opportunities for strengthening tertiary education across Commonwealth countries.

Professor Ts. Dr. Yatimah participated as a panellist in Plenary Session 1, titled ‘Shaping the Future of Tertiary Education across the Commonwealth: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for

Cooperation,' alongside Director of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India, Professor Ganesan Kannabiran, Vice-President (Education), Monash University Malaysia, Professor Dr. Stephen Boyle, and Professor Dato' Gs. Dr. Narimah Samat from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

The session was moderated by Professor Dr. Wan Chang Da from Taylor's University.



During the discussion, she highlighted that universities must rethink conventional models of education to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world, particularly as artificial intelligence (AI), technological advancements and evolving industry demands continue to transform how people learn and work.

"The traditional idea that we study, graduate and then work with the same set of skills for the next thirty years is becoming less realistic," she said.

She stressed that higher education must embrace lifelong learning, flexible educational pathways and opportunities for individuals to continuously develop new competencies throughout their careers.

In this context, she highlighted UMPSA's Flexible Learning and Micro-Credential Centre (FLEXMC), which supports flexible and stackable learning pathways, as well as its Quality Verification Centre (QVC), which ensures the quality and credibility of stand-alone micro-credentials.

These initiatives demonstrate UMPSA's efforts to broaden access to higher education while supporting upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning.

Drawing on UMPSA's strengths in engineering, technology and Advanced Technical and Vocational

Education and Training (Advanced TVET), she also highlighted the importance of integrating academic knowledge with practical learning, industry engagement and real-world problem-solving.

Professor Ts. Dr. Yatimah challenged universities to reconsider traditional approaches to internationalisation, noting that meaningful international exposure should not be limited to physical mobility or the number of students travelling abroad.

She emphasised the importance of creating meaningful international learning opportunities for more students through shorter mobility programmes, blended learning and collaborative international classrooms, particularly for those facing financial or geographical constraints.



Beyond mobility, she stressed that international partnerships must evolve from conventional agreements and ceremonial engagements towards purposeful collaborations that produce measurable outcomes.

“The success of our partnerships should not be counted only in signed documents, but in opportunities created, capabilities strengthened and problems solved together,” she emphasised.

She further encouraged Commonwealth universities to leverage their complementary strengths through joint applied research, collaborative teaching, reciprocal capacity-building and partnerships addressing shared challenges such as sustainable manufacturing, clean energy and responsible AI.



Looking ahead, Professor Ts. Dr. Yatimah emphasised that the future of tertiary education depends on institutions being willing to rethink established practices, embrace innovation responsibly and ensure that opportunities remain inclusive and accessible.

The symposium also provided a valuable platform for UMPSA to contribute to international discussions on higher education transformation and strengthen its engagement with the Commonwealth higher education community.

Through its focus on Advanced TVET, industry-responsive education, flexible learning and meaningful global partnerships, UMPSA continues to strengthen its role in preparing future-ready graduates equipped to navigate change and contribute to society.

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