

# Learning pact with Asean partners

THE Higher Education Ministry will adopt the Asean Work Plan on Education 2016 to 2020, in a bid to boost the learning curve of Malaysian children.

Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Mary Yap said the decision was made during the Ninth Asean Education Ministers (ASEM) meeting which she and Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh attended recently.

"This will guide cooperation in education over the next five years and will unify all collaborative efforts on education between the Asean dialogue partners and various international organisations that support Asean," she said after opening the UCSI University Fourth Applied Science Week (ASW) in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

Yap added that the meeting themed "Fostering Asean Community of Learners: Empowering Lives Through Education", recognised children as key stakeholders and affirmed the importance of education in promoting better quality of life for the new generation.

"Most importantly, the plan provides the country's future leaders the opportunity to participate and benefit from



Yap (centre) with the university's Faculty of Applied Science dean Assoc Prof Dr Bimo Ario Tejo (left) and deputy vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Zainuddin at the launch.

the realisation of a prosperous Asean Community 2025," she pointed out.

The Asean Work Plan on Education 2016 to 2020 focuses on eight key areas that include education for sustainable development, higher education devel-

opment and quality assurance mechanisms, university-industry partnerships, capacity building for teachers and the education community, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and lifelong learning,

heightening awareness of Asean, ensuring quality and basic access to education for the masses.

Yap said the adoption of the plan was "crucial" to Malaysia as it would empower the lives of future leaders and impact-makers of the country.

"We have to prioritise the education of our children and continue efforts to prepare our youth to face the challenges of tomorrow," she said pointing out that the learning curve of children will impact the economic prospects of a country.

As for the UCSI University Fourth ASW, Yap said the institution had recognised the urgency to "inculcate enthusiasm" for science among youth.

"It is an absolute necessity to drive the growth of home-grown talents and human capital in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as interest towards these subjects among Malaysian youth is rapidly declining," she said.

Yap added that by having a STEM-based workforce of less than 3%, Malaysia may experience a "serious human capital shortage" in the field soon. — By LEE CHONGHUI