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# Digital tech status for 13 tertiary institutions

THE Higher Education Ministry and the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) awarded eight universities and five polytechnics with the Premier Digital Tech University and Preferred Digital Tech Polytechnic status respectively.

Its minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh thanked MDEC for ensuring the smooth flow of the country's information and communications technology agenda.

"This is another step forward for us to produce talents of world-class level within the field.

"We have to take it step by step, but this effort will be continuously improved on by selecting the (suitable) institutions of higher learning and by working with the industry," he told reporters here on Monday after presenting the awards.

Also present were director-general Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hamisah Tapsir, MDEC chief executive officer Datuk Yasmin Mahmood, Universiti Malaya (UM) deputy vice-chancellor (Research & Innovation) Dr Noor-saadah Abd Rahman, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Faculty of Computing dean Prof Dr Abdul Samad Ismail and Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) deputy vice-chancellor (Industry Community and Alumni Network) Prof Dr Zaini Abdullah.

The eight universities are UM, UTM, UiTM, Multimedia University, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Sunway University, Taylor's



(From left, front row): Idris, Dr Noor-saadah, Dr Abdul Samad, Dr Zaini together with (back row) Dr Siti Hamisah and Yasmin at the ceremony.

University and Asia Pacific University.

The five polytechnics are Politeknik Balik Pulau, Penang, Politeknik Mersing, Johor, Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah, Selangor, Politeknik Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu and Politeknik Ungku Omar, Perak.

Yasmin said the selection process

was intense and transparent.

"We worked with the industry to look at their demands and requirements, and also benchmarked (ourselves) with other countries to see how they produced digital innovators.

"We then opened up applications to universities and polytechnics to apply, after which we did a thor-

ough and independent assessment before selecting them.

"They will not be the only institutes (with the status).

"We will continue to refresh (the application) and the existing institutions must maintain their standards," she said.

Yasmin thanked the ministry, stating it had given them the

approval to push the envelope for talent development in the digital economy field.

She said talented students must be exposed and nurtured in order to develop them as innovators.

"By having Premier Digital Tech Universities and Preferred Digital Tech Polytechnics, we will push talented students into these institutions which have the right teaching pedagogy.

"They can collaborate with the industry in not only developing curriculum but have career centres to provide information to students of the potential in digital economy," she said.

Yasmin said, if talents were not "plucked out" and uncovered, they were likely to go abroad to pursue other opportunities.

"With this, we hope to not only retain top talents in our country but to nurture more of them," she added.

When launching the ministry's Merdeka celebrations, Idris said student athletes have made the country proud by collecting a total of 97 medals at the 29th SEA Games as of Aug 27. He said the ministry does not merely focus on students' academic performances.

"In line with our integrated cumulative grade point average (iCGPA), we look at students' achievements in sports as well," he said.