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Ecuador Offers UKM To Participate In Its New Vision City

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**By Saiful Bahri Kamaruddin
Pix Izwan Azman**

BANGI, 26 June 2013 – Ecuador has offered The National University of Malaysia (UKM) participation in a ground-breaking educational project at a new visionary city in the South American country.

Ecuador's Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility Minister, Ricardo Patino said he was impressed by UKM's achievements and will recommend that his country's universities have cooperation with the Malaysian institution at the planned city of Yachay.

Patino was speaking during his delegation's meeting with UKM Vice-Chancellor, Prof Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin and heads of research centres and representatives of faculties here today.

Patino said Yachay is being envisioned as South America's Silicon Valley or "City of Knowledge Research Centre" which incorporates Education with Industry to foster innovation while providing comfortable homes to knowledge workers.

Yachay is a Quechua, or Inca word meaning "The utilization of knowledge with wisdom". Ecuador's government led by President Rafael Correa hopes Yachay will have the best universities in Latin America, which will develop new technologies in science, medicine, telecommunications, cybernetics, nanotechnology and botany.

Patino was on an official visit to Malaysia from June 25 to 27. Ecuador, a Spanish-speaking country of about 14 million people, is rich in fruits, vegetables and flowers and is the world's biggest exporter of bananas with annual production of six million tonnes.

Speaking through an interpreter, the minister said his country is mainly an exporter of raw materials but wants to be an exporter of manufactured goods like Malaysia.

"That is why we want to increase it," said Patino, adding that Ecuador has important relationships with China, South Korea and Japan in Asia.



He requested Malaysian institutions of higher learning take part in the transformation of Ecuador's economy.

He praised Malaysia for being competitive in the field of high technology and said his country aspires to do the same through the linking of education with industry.

"Malaysia is also a leader in the world in producing electronic products, so there is a lot to do in this regard," said the 58-year-old minister.

Patino said Malaysian companies are welcomed to invest in Ecuador as the country offers vast potential and opportunities for investors.

Prof Sharifah Hapsah said UKM is willing to share its model of success while learning from Ecuadorean universities.

She said she found it interesting that, like Malaysia, Ecuador has rainforests that are rich in potential healthcare products.

She proposed UKM cooperate with universities in Ecuador in solar energy research as the South American is committed to using renewable energy.

She also suggested Ecuadorean universities take part in mobility programmes with UKM just like what UKM has with another Latin American country, Mexico, which recently sent its students to UKM for a mobility exchange programme.

Present at the meeting was Ecuador's ambassador to Malaysia, Lourdes Puma Puma and Secretary for the Americas Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dato' Syed Sultan Idris.





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