



WAKTU BERBUKA PUASA



Imsak 05:47 AM

Maghrib 19:21 PM

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Research centre recognised for role in reducing gender gap



By [Dzulkifli Abdul Razak](#) - April 21, 2021 @ 12:01am



-NSTP File Pix

Few know that April 17 is a milestone for women's and children's development in the country. The Women and Children's Development Research Centre (Kanita) in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) was made an autonomous research centre by the University Senate in 2001.

This is an endorsement of the centre's achievements and its leadership since its establishment in 1978, further demonstrates USM's commitment "to lead in the exploration of new thinking and knowledge that considers gender as an important analytical framework for theory and research".

When first conceived, it was the only centre of its kind in Malaysia, pioneering a field which was little known and marginalised, beginning with

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Today, it has evolved into a centre of excellence within the university and beyond. It amply demonstrates the forward thinking of its leadership towards gender development.

In other words, the centre reflects more than 30 years of advanced critical thinking in the development of theoretical and methodological tools and policy strategies aimed at equalising and mainstreaming gender in education and nation-building.

At the same time, it reflects the transdisciplinary efforts and dedication of academic members from various disciplines towards championing gender justice and equity across the society, both theoretically and in practice.

Overall, it has provided a solid foundation for "the rise of a new kind of academic culture where women and gender programmes are enriched with multi- and interdisciplinary interaction with generic disciplines of social sciences, humanities, management, communication, education and medical sciences, health sciences and pharmaceutical sciences".

Kanita has brought new meaning to the process of engendering knowledge, thus, bringing gender perspectives to the forefront of academic thinking. It is now an active participant in global agenda such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), not limited to SDG 5, but encompassing SDG 4, 8, 10 and 16.

After all, USM is among the first universities to be privileged to hold the pioneering Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development since 2005.

Additionally, Kanita takes the issue across the board in ensuring gender development is well understood and an issue that involved the men as

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The situation is of concern because it showed a downward trend since 2006. Remaining in the same position this year, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei did better in the respective double-digit positions in that order. Bangladesh at position 50, is the best Muslim-majority country in that regard.

All said and done, given the pandemic situation, Malaysia's lowly performance will be counter-productive since reportedly women and children are among the most vulnerable group who need help. Domestic

violence and other forms of aggression are on the rise during the pandemic and so is the issue of mental and reproductive health among children and adolescents, too.

Yet, without a doubt, women leadership globally seems to take a sterling position in managing and controlling the pandemic in their respective countries. In short, the role of Kanita must be enhanced further nationwide if not regionally and globally.

It should not be compromised in whatever way, not only given its track record, but more so its potential role in handling the pandemic, now and in the future.

Kudos Kanita, and continue to lead.

The writer, an NST columnist for more than 20 years, is International Islamic University Malaysia rector and the Universiti Sains Malaysia 5th vice-chancellor (2000-2011)

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