



19 JUN, 2020

## Move to bridge rural-urban digital learning gap

The Sun, Malaysia

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**GEORGE TOWN:** As a leading innovator in online distance learning, Wawasan Open University (WOU) has plans to bridge the digital learning gap between rural and urban areas. It aims to build a talent pool that automation cannot replace.

Its chief executive officer and vice-chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan urged the government to ready the necessary infrastructure and provide even distribution of digital accessibility across all communities.

"We welcome and support the various federal government initiatives, especially the laying of fibre optic infrastructure across the country to increase coverage. For interior areas where this may not be feasible, ongoing measures are being carried out to expand satellite broadband connectivity.

"At the micro-level, financial assistance should be available to allow rural communities access, as well as financial assistance for students to purchase various mobile devices."

As technology is slowly displacing the finite limits of brick and mortar institutions, it

has raised a need for more public and private collaborations to fully tap tech resources.

"Technology cannot wait for policy. It leaps ahead on its own timetable. Trends and the needs of students shift faster than policy makers can move.

"I firmly believe that for a developing nation like Malaysia, no one should be left behind when it comes to online learning and participation in the digital economy.

"WOU is keen to work with higher education authorities to meet the needs of the next generation of students by combing its resources with public sector infrastructure and social amenities.

"University collaborations with industry must also be vigorously promoted to co-develop curricula and make learning experiences more applicable."

But gaps in online learning continue to hinder the progress that e-learning is supposed to make following the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Universiti Sains Malaysia don said there is a mismatch as some students lack necessary equipment and connectivity. – by **Ian McIntyre**



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### SUMMARIES

GEORGE TOWN: As a leading innovator in online distance learning, Wawasan Open University (WOU) has plans to bridge the digital learning gap between rural and urban areas. It aims to build a talent pool that automation cannot replace. Its chief executive officer and vicechancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan urged the government to ready the necessary infrastructure and provide even distribution of digital accessibility across all communities.