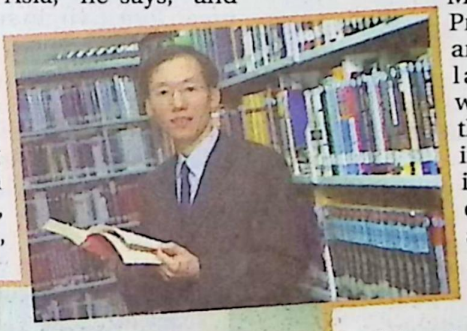
it is critical to be able to offer rural population the benefits that are enjoyed by urban population. Han believes that mere provision of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) will not solve all the difficulties related to life in rural communities. (This also applies to any problems in the city.) ICT can take a role in enhancing the life in rural communities.

"Farming, plantation and other rural industries could utilise ICTs to make their business become robust and stay sustainable. ICTs could keep the farmers up-to-date with required skills and knowledge; help them closely informed of the needs of consumers and market situations or help the farmers interact with the consumers in the city directly to maximise their profits; it could also help them connect to other rural population who are involved in similar work or facing similar farming issues and problems; they could be educated with farm management skills for effective running of their enterprise. Overall, their economic activities could be better supported and modernised for their most benefits which would improve productivity," says Han.

"Effective education of future generation, through the exposure of the children to rich and educative information available outside the rural community or through the Internet, could be pursued. Urban children frequently utilise the Internet for their homework, utilising a vast amount of knowledge available there."

"Effective use of ICTs could also help their families living in rural and urban areas stay connected. The family values could be well preserved -- the list goes on." Han also believes that mere provision of ICTs including mobile phones, computers and internet is not going to resolve the issues. "Proper investigation of people at grassroots level in terms of their awareness of ICTs and their needs to have ICTs and proper education of the population as to how the ICTs can be best utilised are crucial. Service facilities in terms of where people can seek support and personnel are also crucial. Also critical is the government's commitment and long-term investment in terms of financial support and providing infrastructure," adds Han.

Professor Richard Larkins, the Vice Chancellor & President of Monash University believes that the partnership with the Sunway campus is a successful, international operation. "It's a wonderful opportunity to build a partnership not only between Australia and Malaysia but also throughout South East Asia," he says, "and gradually the campus is becoming increasing international and is attracting students from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka as well as Indonesia and other countries in the region."





"We believe higher education should be multicultural. Students can learn a lot about each other and their countries. Links and network formed here help with trade and business later on and students are better equipped to professionally function in a globalised world. We want this campus to be an international university so we welcome students from different countries and cultures."

The medical school of Monash in Malaysia is fully accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and is the only medical programme offered outside Australia and New Zealand to receive such an accreditation. This means that if the graduates from Malaysia wish to practice in Australia (or New Zealand), the AMC would not put any further barriers (provided they get a visa) in their way. Students from the medical programme have access to government clinics and a range of private facilities and they are all expected to do at least 3 months of their final year in Australia, so they have an understanding of the western clinical environment. The university is also going to start Pharmacy in 2009.

"It's a complicated thing to set up a medical school," says Professor Merilyn Liddell, the Pro Vice Chancellor and President (Malaysia), "and we wanted to be sure that we were providing really high quality education. We expect to take in about 110 medical students in February 2008."

There are opportunities for scholarships for overseas meritorious students. Those who don't earn scholarships when they enter can also get merit scholarships based on their performance in the course. Depending on how well they do, it can be 50% to a full scholarship. There are also a lot of post-graduate research scholarships. "At this campus we make no distinctions between local and overseas students," says Liddell. Although the Malaysian government laws restrict students from being able to work, Monash University is lobbying with the authorities to allow students to work inside the university campus. It also has a comprehensive student services programme that helps with employment seeking after graduation. A purpose-built student hostel is being built near the university and is expected to be ready by 2009/2010 which will have about 1500 beds and will be primarily accessible for international students.

For more information on the Sunway campus of Monash University please visit: http://www.monash.edu.my/newcampus/index.htm

Photo Courtesy: Monash University, Malaysia