

Press release

22 August 2004

Petronas University of Technology Opened by Prime Minister of Malaysia

The Prime Minister of Malaysia officially opened the new Petronas University of Technology on 22 August 2004. The Foster and Partners-designed University is on a scale that is more consistent with town planning than conventional building. The scheme brings together several medium-scale buildings in a single architectural assemblage. This dynamic arrangement, which responds to the demanding local climate, topography, and the university's academic program, reaffirms the institution's status as the largest academic centre for the study of civil, mechanical, chemical and electrical engineering in the region. Fully funded by Malaysia's national petroleum corporation, Petroliaam Nasional Bhd (PETRONAS), it blends academic training with hands-on industrial experience to produce graduates who will contribute to Malaysia's industrial development.

Located within the beautiful and dramatic landscape at Seri Iskandar, 300 kilometres north of Kuala Lumpur, the 450-hectare site is characterised by gentle hills and lakes formed by flooded disused tin mines. The design responds to the physical landscape of the site and to the weather patterns particular to this part of the world. While it can be intensely hot in the sun, during the monsoon season the skies open every afternoon to bring torrential rain, creating a cycle in which the ground is alternately scorched and soaked. To allow students to move around the campus while shaded from the sun or protected from heavy downpours, soaring canopies protect the pedestrian routes that wind around the edge of the site. Held aloft by slender columns, these canopies intersect to encircle a central landscaped park. Where possible, the jungle forming the park has been left in a natural state.

Arranged around the edge of the park are buildings for teaching and research, contained in four-storey blocks that tuck beneath the edges of the canopies. Cafes and other communal student facilities are located at the canopy intersections, which are linked to the entrances to the housing blocks. Marking the main entrance to the University is the drum-like form of the resource centre. Containing a library, with half a million volumes, and a 3000 seat multi-purpose main hall, it is the principal social hub of the campus. Future expansion will see the completion of a sports stadium and a mosque - amenities that will be shared with the residents of a new town planned adjacent to the University.

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