

Collegiate Connection

Concerted public and private action is taking Taiwan-Malaysia education ties to new heights.

BY KELLY HER
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Born and raised in Malaysia, Lin Chia-en (林佳恩) has always felt an affinity with her parents' home country of Taiwan. She recently graduated from the Chinese Taipei School (CTS) in Kuala Lumpur and is starting her undergraduate studies in the Department of Bio-Industry Communication and Development at Taipei City's National Taiwan University (NTU) in August.

"With its emphasis on marketing, the program will prepare me for a wide range of careers," Lin said. "I'm so excited to have the opportunity to attend one of Taiwan's top universities and live in the country for the very first time." The 18-year-old, who regularly visited Taiwan with her family while growing up, enjoys its beautiful scenery, delicious food and convenient public transportation.

Lin is part of the 80 percent of CTS alumni who pursue further studies in Taiwan. Established by investors from Taiwan in 1991 and supported by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the international school offers instruction from preschool to high school. According to CTS Principal Cheng Ya-fen (鄭雅芬), the institution uses the same curriculum and textbooks as schools in Taiwan, allowing graduates to easily integrate into its higher education system.

Though CTS offers English- and Malay-language programs, courses are mainly taught in Chinese. "Our mission is to promote Mandarin education while cultivating students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills to prepare them for

- 01. Cheng Ya-fen, back row, center, principal of Chinese Taipei School in Kuala Lumpur, smiles alongside teachers and students in front of the school entrance.
- 02. Lin Chia-en, a recent CTS graduate, proudly points out her painting on display at the school.
- 03 & 04. CTS offers preschool through high school education using the same curriculum and textbooks as schools in Taiwan.



the workforce," Cheng said. "We're gratified to see the high percentage of students who later attend university in Taiwan."

Linked Learning

The government is joining forces with private organizations to make Taiwan the number one destination for Malaysians to obtain degrees or study Mandarin. The Education Division at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Malaysia serves as an information hub on Taiwan's tertiary programs, Chinese language centers and scholarship





opportunities. It also cooperates with local schools and alumni associations to organize Chinese proficiency tests, education fairs and other promotional activities.

“Taiwan is already a popular place for Malaysians to study abroad because of its quality education, cultural diversity and friendly atmosphere,” said Chang Charlin (張佳琳), director of the Education Division. “The close academic connections between our two countries have helped solidify that preference.” Cooperative initiatives include teacher and student exchanges, research collaboration, sister school partnerships and mutual recognition of institutional accreditation.

As a result, Malaysia has become one of Taiwan’s largest sources of overseas students, with enrollment exceeding 12,000 individuals in 2022. “Taiwan isn’t just attracting Chinese Malaysians; the option to participate in English-taught programs is drawing a considerable number of Malays to study there too, demonstrating the country’s growing international appeal,” Chang said. “The availability of halal food and prayer rooms also helps attract Malay students, who are predominantly Muslim.”

Mutual Benefits

The strength of academic links can be seen in the 100,000 Malaysians who have

graduated from Taiwan universities and subsequently become vocal promoters of the country’s tertiary education. Desire to study abroad continues unabated, with the latest Taiwan Higher Education Fair hosted by Kuala Lumpur-headquartered Federation of Alumni Association of Taiwan Universities, Malaysia (FAATUM) in March and April drawing large crowds. At the events held in five major cities, 200 representatives of 78 universities in Taiwan met with an estimated total of 16,000 local students and parents.

According to FAATUM President Tang Yong Chew, the organization, which currently has 48 member associations nationwide, offers assistance to Malaysian students interested in studying in Taiwan and organizes recruitment campaigns and exchanges. Its services recently expanded to include leveraging its broad alumni network to help new graduates find jobs or start businesses in Taiwan or Malaysia. Perhaps the federation’s biggest accomplishment since its founding in 1974, however, is its successful petition for the Malaysian

04. FAATUM President Tang Yong Chew is one of the many Malaysian alumni of Taiwan universities committed to advancing bilateral ties.



government to recognize medical degrees from nine universities in Taiwan.

“We’re committed to advancing bilateral ties to show appreciation to Taiwan for equipping us with the skills that enabled our professional success,” said Tang, who graduated with a dentistry degree from Taipei Medical University in 1986. “Our mission is to make sure more Malaysians benefit from Taiwan’s well-rounded education system.” After returning home, the federation’s president went on to found Kuala Lumpur-based Goldstone Group, which encompasses a dental clinic chain, as well as hotel management and property development businesses.

Robust education ties between Taiwan and Malaysia promote understanding and trust while building strong talent pipelines that boost national development and regional prosperity. “The outstanding achievements and contributions of Malaysian alumni in their chosen fields attest to the quality of Taiwan’s academic institutions,” said TECO’s Chang. “Educational resource sharing is one of the country’s top priorities in Southeast Asia and a demonstration of its soft power.”



01 & 02. The Taiwan Higher Education Fair hosted by Kuala Lumpur-headquartered Federation of Alumni Association of Taiwan Universities, Malaysia in five major cities in March and April draws an estimated total of 16,000 students and parents.

03 & 05. A FAATUM delegation visits National Chi Nan University in central Taiwan’s Nantou County and Taipei Medical University in the capital to gain a better understanding of their programs and facilities during a fact-finding tour in May.

01 & 02. Courtesy of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia
03 & 05. Courtesy of Federation of Alumni Association of Taiwan Universities, Malaysia