

# EkuiNAS to list education arm

## It wants to maintain significant stake in Ilmu group post-listing

By INTAN FARHANA ZAINUL  
intanzainul@thestar.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR:** State-backed private equity firm Ekuiti Nasional Bhd (EkuiNAS) has unveiled its consolidated education group, Ilmu Education Group Bhd (Ilmu) as it targets a listing of the unit on Bursa Malaysia within six to 12 months.

The Ilmu group consists of Unitar International University, Asia Pacific University (APU), Cosmopoint College, Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT) in Sri Lanka, Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan University College, Tenby Educare Sdn Bhd and Asia Pacific Schools.

EkuiNAS CEO Datuk Abdul Rahman Ahmad said the firm would continue to look for potential acquisitions to further grow Ilmu's portfolio, both in Malaysia and also in Sri Lanka.

"We will put more funds to grow Ilmu, both organically or through acquisitions," he told reporters after the launch of Ilmu yesterday.

Although he did not reveal which were the targeted businesses, he said EkuiNAS was looking to expand in the Islamic and vocational segments as well opportunities in Sri Lanka.

He said the fund was already talking to



**En route to listing:** Unitar International University's main campus in Kelana Jaya. The university is part of the Ilmu Education Group Bhd, which EkuiNAS plans to list in six to 12 months

companies in the industry.

Abdul Rahman said that EkuiNAS wanted to maintain a significant stake in Ilmu post-listing.

"We are preparing the ground work for Ilmu to be ready for the listing exercise. The listing of Ilmu on Bursa Malaysia is something that we preferred, but we will not rule out a strategic sale," he added.

EkuiNAS started its investment in the education sector in 2010 with the acquisition of APIIT Education Group in Sri Lanka.

EkuiNAS' latest investment in the education sector was in March when it bought a 70% stake in Tenby - a chain of international and private schools - for RM70mil.

Its education portfolio, comprising tertiary and K-12 education, which is primary and

secondary education, has a student count of over 35,000 across 21 campuses.

Collectively, Ilmu posted RM100mil in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (ebitda) on pro forma revenue of RM376.7mil for the financial year 2014 (FY14).

Rahman said that EkuiNAS' strategy had always been to acquire several private companies and consolidate them to create market leaders, such as Icon Offshore Bhd. EkuiNAS put together Icon by merging Tanjung Offshore Bhd's offshore support vessel (OSV) business - Tanjung Kapal Services Sdn Bhd - with Omni Petromaritime Sdn Bhd back in November 2012. EkuiNAS listed Icon in June 2014.

"One of the core sectors of EkuiNAS investment is in education, which represents about 23% of our investment portfolio to date," said EkuiNAS chairman Raja Tan Sri Arshad Raja Tun Uda.

In FY14, EkuiNAS invested about RM605.8mil and in total, the firm has 33 investments totaling RM3bil since inception in 2009.

EkuiNAS currently invests in six core sectors.

They are retail food and beverages, fast moving consumer goods, oil and gas, services, education and manufacturing.