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USM is Apex varsity

PUTRAJAYA: Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) was yesterday chosen for the Accelerated Programme for Excellence (Apex), beating three other universities, including University of Malaya (UM), the country's oldest.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin told a press conference that USM was selected based on its transformation plan and its preparedness to make changes to its proposal paper.

"The selection for the Apex programme is not only based on past achievements and excellence, but also on the planning for the future and whether the university is able to achieve world-class status within the stipulated five years," he said when announcing the selection.

During the five years, USM must be able to put itself in the Times Higher Education Supplement list of world's Top 100 universities and among the Top 50 by 2020, he said.

"Let's see how USM fares and then we will decide whether to choose another for the programme," he said.

Nine public universities submitted applications for the programme but only USM, UM, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia were shortlisted.

USM's winning proposal paper was entitled "Transforming Higher Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow".

In a brief statement issued yesterday in George Town, USM deputy registrar and communications head Mohamad Abdullah said the university had undertaken a

series of innovative programmes to enhance its capacity and stature in academic fields.

He noted USM's emphasis on fostering research and specialist expertise as a prime factor in elevating its credentials. "We at USM feel gratified and touched at being selected," he said.

He said that the recognition was a fitting gift for the university's 40th anniversary next year. He stressed that USM had taken great pains to ensure its educational thrust remained relevant to future needs.

Mohamed Khaled said USM's selection did not mean that others were sidelined. On the other hand, it should spur them to improve their position, he said.

The Apex is part of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan where universities will be divided into Apex University, Elite University and Competitive University.

An Apex university is one of excellence used as a yardstick in higher education worldwide. An Apex university is promised autonomy in finance, service scheme, management, student intake, study fees and in determining the top administrative leadership.

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- Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin
Higher Education Minister