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UM not deterred, to strive for global status

KUALA LUMPUR: Despite not being chosen as the country's first Apex university, Universiti Malaya will still proceed in its efforts to reach top university status on a global scale.

Its vice-chancellor Datuk Rafiah Salim said that UM started implementing strategies towards this goal two years ago.

"The results have been seen as far as local university standards are concerned," she said.

On Wednesday, Higher Education Minister Datuk Khaled Nordin announced that Universiti Sains Malaysia would be the country's first Apex university.

USM was chosen based on its state of readiness, its transformation plan and preparedness for change.

It scored an upset against the older and the higher ranked UM, as well as beating Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, which had also been

shortlisted.

Rafiah said UM's next step was to move towards the global higher educational platform.

One of the initiatives taken in this direction was the setting up of a RM30 million fund to send local UM students on foreign exchange programmes, she added.

"Our aim is to send 1,000 students a year supported by the fund."

She said the first batch of 50 students from various faculties had already been selected for the programme.

UM has also ventured into having joint post-graduate programmes with top universities overseas.

"The University of Sydney has a partnership with us in the sport medicine programme and we are in the process of having similar partnerships with some universities in the UK," she said.

On the government's aim to have another Apex university

by 2011, she said UM's efforts would continue regardless of this.

UPM vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Nik Mustapha Abdullah said they had put in a good proposal in applying for Apex university status but "USM had put in a better proposal".

Asked if UPM would step up its efforts to try to be the country's next Apex university, he said that UPM would stick to their current proposal but be more competitive in terms of key performance indicators (KPI). "We will raise the standards of our KPIs."

He said UPM had already implemented many of the criteria of an Apex university, such as having a high foreign student enrolment.

Meanwhile, UKM vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hassan Shahabuddin said that they would still go ahead with their transformation plan, irrespective of gaining Apex university status.