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IBM develops new course for universities

KUALA LUMPUR: Enterprise software giant IBM Malaysia will collaborate with eleven local universities to establish and develop a multi-discipline curriculum called Service Science Management and Engineering (SSME).

The curriculum is a new academic discipline that mixes both technical and business aspects.

It brings together the present technical subjects such as computer science and engineering with business studies subjects like operations research, management sciences, business strategy, social and cognitive sciences and legal sciences.

The universities that will help develop the programme are Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, University Putra Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Universiti Malaysia Pahang.

Speaking at the launch of the programme, Science, Technology and Innovation minister Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili said the creation of the programme is timely as there is a global shift toward a services-driven economy.

The programme will complement rather than replace the current business and computer science curricula used in institutes of higher learning today.

"Educational programmes

must be formalised to nurture services professionals and researchers and the SSME is an urgent call to action to develop a 'science of services,'" he said, adding that the new programme will also address the education gap by combining both business and technical skills.

According to IBM Malaysia managing director Ou Shian Waei, the service sector is expected to experience an annual growth of 7.5% between 2006 and 2020 and is expected to contribute about 60% to the Malaysian economy by then.

"However, the country needs proper human capital in order to realise that," he said.

The new programme, Ou said, marks the beginning of enhancing Malaysia's services landscape.

Ou also said that Universiti Sains Malaysia will be the first to use the new curricula by offering an e-MBA on SSME, which is expected to begin next March.

However, the other 10 universities did not disclose when they will offer the programme to its students.

"It will be up to these universities on when they plan to include this curriculum into their syllabi as we also need to measure the demand for this curriculum," Higher Education Ministry director general Datuk Prof Radin Umar said. — **JO TIMBUONG**