

Varsities get RM10m to nurture athletes

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JOHOR BARU: The Higher Education Ministry is allocating about RM10 million to higher-learning institutions selected under its programme to develop sports among undergraduates.

Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Khaled Nordin said under its Sports Excellence Centres (Pusat Kecemerlangan Sukan) at universities nationwide, the ministry would develop selected sports in a systematic method and provide further education for student athletes in order to create "thinking athletes".

"The programme is in line with the ministry's goal to have 30 per cent of the country's athletes to be from higher-learning institutions by 2015.

"In addition, the Sports Excellence Centres are expected to be centres for research and reference for its selected focus sport," said Khaled during his speech at the launch of Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) as a "Pencak Silat" Focus Sport Centre.

Eight higher-learning institutions have been selected as Sports Excellence Centres nationwide, each focusing on a specific sport.

These centres will receive allocations for sports-related infrastructure, equipment, training, competitions, research and sourcing for new talents.

"The sports development programme is intended to encourage existing athletes to further develop their skills when they further their studies.

"It is also to provide education opportunities for those active in sports at tertiary level."

The eight Sports Excellence Centres are Universiti Malaya (netball), Universiti Sains Malaysia (swimming), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (cricket), Universiti Putra Malaysia (rugby), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (rowing), Universiti Teknologi Mara (football), Universiti Utara Malaysia (golf) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (taekwondo).

Khaled said that besides the eight universities, other institutions which had the potential to become centres for sporting excellence had also been given the status of Focus Sport Centre.

So far, there are 18 higher-learning institutions with the Focus Sport Centre status, one of them being UTHM.

Khaled added that out of the RM10 million being allocated by the ministry for sports development this year, about RM7.2 million was for the Sports Excellence Centres and RM3.6 million for the Focus Sport Centres.

Khaled praised UTHM for its status as a Focus Sport Centre for "Pencak Silat" as it was regarded as a competitive sport that was also a national heritage that needed to be preserved for future generations.