

KOTA KINABALU: An educational milestone was attained in Sabah yesterday when Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) admitted its first batch of 34 medical students.

From as little as a decade ago when the absence of a university in Sabah justified local politicians' criticisms of the Federal government for unequal distribution of development, the opening of UMS several years ago marked the beginning of the changing landscape of education in the State.

The launching of the UMS medical faculty has cemented UMS's position as a premier educational institution in the country, although it is one of the newest public institutions of higher learning.

The 34 medical students are among about 4,000 new students the UMS will admit for the 2003-4 academic year, pushing its student population to over 10,000. When fully developed, it is envisaged that UMS will have over 20,000 students, making it the largest in the country.

Speaking to reporters on the new medical students, UMS Vice-Chancellor Tan Sri Dr Abd

Hassan Othman said the number of applications received by the university was more than the places offered this year.

"Overall, students admitted this academic session have the cumulative grade point average of between 3.8 and 4.0," he said.

UMS, he added, would discuss with several hospitals in Sabah, including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital here, for their assistance in providing clinical training for its undergraduates.

Dr Abu Hassan said that UMS would also

appoint external and internal advisers to ensure that its medical school achieve the highest possible international standard.

UMS Medical School Dean is Prof Dr Osman Ali who is formerly the head of Social Health Department in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's (UKM) Medical Faculty.

Meanwhile, one of the 34 UMS pioneer medical students. Mohd Firdaus Mohd Hayati, 20, said he chose the course as he wanted to change the perception that a religious school

students was only fit to become either a religious officer or teacher.

Mohd Firdaus, from Pendang in Kedah, is a former student at Sekolah Agama Maahad Muhammad in Kelantan and he obtained first grade in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination with two A1s and five A2s.

The two-day registration for new students which began yesterday will see the UMS admitting 3,965 freshies for the 2003/2004 academic session. — Bernama

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