Foreign challenge for paddlers

KUALA LUMPUR: Competition at the Deputy Higher Education Minister’s Cup table tennis championships on April 12-15 is set to rise a notch this year with the organisers implementing a number of changes to improve the overall quality of the event.

The tournament, which will be held at the Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) Sports Centre in Kuantan, Pahang, will for the first time in its three-year history allow foreign students to take part in the team event in an effort to raise the level of play at the competition.

Organised by the Community College Sports Council (MASKOM) with the support of the Higher Education Ministry, a new doubles category, for both men and women, will also be introduced to complement the team, men’s and women’s individual events and allow for more players to compete in the tournament.

The competition, which is expected to see 70 teams from various higher education institutions competing, will also see the total prize purse raised to RM16,000 from the RM10,000 offered last year.

Community Colleges Department Director General, Amir Md Noor, said the changes were intended to see more top-class athletes produced from among university students.

“We believe there is no shortage of talent among our students and only by organising and fine-tuning tournaments like this will be able to spot them,” said Amir, who officiated the launch of the tournament at the Olympic Council of Malaysia recently.

“By allowing foreign players to take part in the tournament, we will be increasing the level of play at the competition which will also allow us to benchmark the level of our (local) players.

“The cream of the local players will be identified at the tournament and will be groomed to represent the country at international tournaments such as the Asean University Games this year.”

The tournament, being one of eight major university tournaments organised by the Higher Education Ministry, will see winners contributing to their respective universities medal tally at the inaugural Malaysian Institutions of Higher Learning Games (SUKIPT) later this year. By Fadhli Ishak
(From left) Dr Saharudin Ismail (secretary of Higher Education Ministry sports division), Amir Md Noor (Community Colleges department director general (JPKK), Mahmood Mohamad (director of Kuantan Community College), Poon Soon Cheong (last year’s silver medallist from UKM) and Ishanudin Hussin (JPKK director of student welfare department) at the press conference for the Deputy Higher Education Minister’s Cup table tennis championships on Monday. Pic by Supian Ahmad