

Shaping tertiary needs through global meet

REPRESENTATIVES from all over the world recently gathered in the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC) for a conference on "Decolonisation, Leadership and Knowledge Democracy in the 21st Century."

The three-day conference brought together Malaysian and international delegates to discuss critical questions about the future of Malaysia's higher education scene.

Launched by Higher Education Department director-general Prof Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, the conference is a unique collaboration between the Education Ministry, through its Academy for Higher Education Leadership (Akept), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus and the Multiversity.

During the launch, Prof Asma lauded the efforts to evolve the state of higher education in the country by both private and public institutions of higher education.

"We all need to have new ideas, new perspectives, new narratives on a new platform



Meeting of minds: Prof Asma I (third from right) and Prof Ennew (right) speaking to the international delegates at the conference.

in how we now do our thinking," she said.

She congratulated both UNMC and USIM for taking forward a partnership, not only between public and private institutions, but also between secular and religious forms of knowledge and education.

Prof Asma also gave special emphasis to the concept of "learned, values-driven talent" as the objective of the Higher

Education blueprint and the strategic development of our local education system.

"As representatives from educational institutions, I think we all have a responsibility to sustain and develop that transformation (of education) by protecting the knowledge we have, but also by challenging it, by developing it, by looking after what we know, but by also developing new knowledge,"

said UNMC provost and chief executive officer Prof Christine Ennew.

Decolonisation is a particularly pressing issue in many developing and emerging nations.

In higher education, this refers to ways in which local institutions move beyond the inherited, traditional conventions and forms of organising universities. Delegates consider ways to restructure faculties, degree programmes and research projects.

Malaysia was represented by members of the Akept Leadership programme, as well as senior figures in higher education.

The conference saw experts in different academic disciplines arguing for the revision and reassessment of traditional ways of organising and leading universities.

Among notable academicians presenting their work at the event were mathematician C.K. Raju, pharmacist and former Universiti Sains Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dzulkilfi Abdul Razak. — **BY REBECCA RAJAENDRAM**