

UiTM students on a mountain M-mission

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IPOH, Thurs. — Universiti Teknologi Mara students who plan to scale the 5,545metre Mount Kalapatthar in the Himalayan range next week have another mission — to form a gigantic letter 'M' on the mountaintop using the Malaysian flag.

They will bring along a Jalur Gemilang, which will be in 40 pieces measuring 0.3m by 100m each, and the pieces when put together will stretch for four kilometres.

The letter 'M' is to signify Malaysia, Mahathir (Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and Mara which the students represent.

The 27-member team, comprising 25 students and two sports officials, will also raise the flags of States which are sponsoring the expedition.

The Perak Government contributed RM40,000 to the team today.

The expedition head, Mohd Sujairi Mohd Ishak, who is also president of the UiTM Students Sports Council, said the team would leave for Kathmandu, Nepal, on April 10 and start the ascend a few days later. They should reach the top of the mountain, in Nepal, in three weeks.

He said there were nine checkpoints to the top and the team would rest two nights at each stop.

"We hope all members will reach the mountaintop as we have been preparing for the

expedition for more than a year," he told reporters after a cheque presentation ceremony at the State Administrative Complex here.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali presented the cheque and the State flag to Mohd Sujairi, who was accompanied by six expedition members from Perak.

Mohd Sujairi said the expedition members were selected

from 500 applicants and they had undergone vigorous training.

Apart from physical fitness, he said they must also excel academically.

He said the expedition to climb Kalapatthar (popularly known as the 'Black Jewel' among Nepalese) would also help them in their preparations to climb the world's highest mountain, Everest, in 2004.

In 1997, mountaineers N. Mohandas and M. Magenderan became the first Malaysians to scale the 8,848-metre Mt Everest.

Earlier, in his speech, Tajol Rosli said the State Government was proud that most of the expedition members came from Perak.

He hoped the expedition would inspire others from the State to similar feats.