

Upgrade ties abroad, private educational institutions told

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By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said private educational institutions should upgrade their co-operation with prominent higher learning institutions overseas.

This, the Prime Minister said, was to ensure that rapid expansion of these institutions locally would not affect the standard and quality of education.

Dr Mahathir added that the Government's liberal policy in education had enabled the private learning institutions to grow rapidly, offering both professional and semi-professional courses.

He said: "Based on student intake, it is evident that these institutions have received overwhelming response as their establishment is aimed at meeting the people's great thirst for knowledge.

"Many of our people are now pursuing knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of a fast developing country," he said.

According to Dr Mahathir, the liberalisation of the country's education policy was something which could not be avoided and was a necessity.

Speaking at the opening of Institut Teknologi Tun Abdul Razak here this evening, Dr Mahathir said there was no Government anywhere which was capable of providing the people's educational needs in all fields.

He said since the country was developing rapidly with concentration on the industrial sector, requirements for all types of skills also increased significantly.

Therefore, he said, the private sector participation was necessary to supplement what could not be provided by the Government because of its limited bud-

get.

He said: "The establishment of private learning institutions also indirectly introduces the element of privatisation into the country's education system, without the Government having to lead the way."

By providing courses which are now only being offered in overseas institutions, local private educational institutions help to reduce the outflow of the country's foreign exchange, he added.

Dr Mahathir said it had been observed that the private sector was more successful in controlling the costs of running such institutions compared with the Government.

This is also another advantage to the country as more people will be able to be educated but with lower investments, he said.

He said if the privatisation of Government agencies could help reduce Gov-

ernment expenditure, the setting up of more private learning institutions including those established by foreign institutions, would enable the Government to channel its money for other development purposes.

Although the Government practises the National Education Policy, the Government is broadminded and pragmatic. Its aim is to provide quality education in line with the Vision 2020 objective, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that it would be better for Malaysians to study in their own country first until they were more mature and capable of defending their culture before venturing overseas to further their studies.

He said students who are exposed to foreign cultures at a very young age would encounter a lot of problems.

In addition, he said, a lot of money could be saved on

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higher education besides enabling the country to produce more skilled manpower.

Named after the late Prime Minister, The Institut Teknologi Tun Abdul Razak (Ittar) which was set up a few months ago is wholly owned by Koperasi Usaha Bersatu Malaysia Berhad (KUB).