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Mahathir-IIU

UPLIFT ISLAM'S IMAGE, PM TELLS IUU

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded the International Islamic University (IIU) of its role in uplifting the image of Islam.

The world generally held Islam in low esteem now, he said.

The IIU should correct the world's misconception and shallow knowledge on the Islamic faith, society and economy, he said when laying the foundation stone for IIU's new campus in Gombak near here.-- more

SJA SH RN

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Mahathir-IIU 2 Kuala Lumpur

Besides, the IIU should attain excellence in specific fields so as to get wider recognition from the international academic fraternity and community, he said.

"The IIU's objective should be not only to be an institution of higher learning recognised and respected by the Islamic world but also by other world universities in general," Dr Mahathir said.

He said IIU's potential to emerge as an international centre of higher education was much better than other local universities.-- more

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"This is because of the IIU's special features and strength," Dr Mahathir said.

He said several internal and external factors provided the opportunity to make the country an international centre for higher learning.

The shifting of world economic growth to the Pacific region had intensified competition among the newly industrialised countries (NICs), he said.

As such every country had realised the need to invest in human resources development, he said.

In 1988 some 75,000 Asean students were studying abroad, and among them 85 per cent were concentrated in the United States, Britain, Australia, Germany, Canada, Japan and France.

However, changes in the fee policies of these countries such as requiring foreign students to pay full fee and the exchange rate factor had compelled governments and parents to find alternative countries to send their children for tertiary education, he said.-- more

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At international and regional fora like the South-South dialogue, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and Asean, Malaysia had pledged to upgrade cooperation in education and training and create opportunities and relevant facilities in the country.

"Here lies the opportunities for this country to formulate strategies and take steps to attract and reverse the flow of Asean students," he said.

Dr Mahathir said to attract foreign students in line with the internationalisation of higher education, it was necessary for local institution of higher learning to concentrate on broader issues.

Among other things, they need to revise the programme contents, teaching methods, the system of credit transfer, counselling and social support.

The medium of language at faculty, institution and higher educational level system itself should also be revised so that it would be easily acceptable to foreign students, Dr Mahathir said.

"Don't we have to revise the profile and system of staff development, organisation and research grants in order to face the challenges posed by the internationalisation of higher education?" he asked.-- more

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Dr Mahathir said there were views that universities were very slow in adapting to the changes around them.

"If local universities and other institutions of learning still maintain the mould and thought of the 50s and are not willing to meet the current and in the years before 2020, the opportunity to develop the country into an international educational centre would just be lost," he said.

The country needed a model institution which was more dynamic and responsive, he said.

Dr Mahathir believed the new IIU campus would further enhance the university's image among the international Islamic community.

The IIU, established a decade ago, is currently being housed in a temporary campus in Petaling Jaya.

The new campus covers some 280 hectares. Work on the first phase costing RM321 million is expected to be completed at the end of next year.

Finance Minister and IIU president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Education Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib and foreign diplomats were among those who attended the ceremony.-- Bernama

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