

WOO STUDENTS

PM: We can be international centre of higher learn

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KUALA LUMPUR: The country can be developed into an international centre of higher learning to attract more foreign students, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He noted there were 75,000 Asean students overseas in 1988, with about 85 per cent studying in the United States, Britain, Australia, Germany, Canada, Japan and France.

However, fees charged on foreign students and higher exchange rates have forced their parents and the Governments to think of alternative countries to send these students.

The Prime Minister said strategies should be planned to woo these students.

"We need more dynamic and responsive institutions of higher learning to promote the country as an international centre for education," he added.

He was speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony of International Islamic University (IIU) campus at Sungai Pusu, Gombak (see also Page 2).

He said the country had several plus points. One was that world economic focus was now on the Pacific region.

"Economic growth, especially among the newly industrialised countries, has prompted keen competition and every country needs to be aware that to compete, it needs to increase investment in human resources development," he said.

Dr Mahathir said local institutions should pay more attention to wider issues and be more accommodating to attract foreign students.

"Some adjustments need to be made on programme contents, methods of teaching, credit transfer system, counselling, social support and language medium to facilitate the intake of foreign students," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the profile and staff development system, organisation and research payments should also be reconsidered to face challenges arising from the internationalisation of higher education.

"There are some views that universities adapt too slowly to the changes in the world around them.

"There is fear that the local universities and other educational institutions still maintain the mould and thinking of the 1950s in handling current problems and challenges of the year 2020," he said.

Also present ceremony were IIU president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Education Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud and Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib.