

PM: Must have courses in Bahasa Malaysia, subjects connected to coun

Conditions for foreign varsitie

By S. Jayakrishnan

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today foreign universities will be allowed to operate in Malaysia as soon as possible provided they fulfil certain conditions and meet the country's needs.

The conditions would include ensuring that a majority of the students are foreigners, that they have courses in Bahasa Malaysia and subjects that are connected to Malaysia.

The foreign universities will be allowed to use other languages.

With the setting up of foreign universities, Dr Mahathir said, the Government hoped to reduce the number of students pursuing first degree courses abroad.

He said it was better to send those who were more mature for education overseas so that they would not be easily influenced by foreign cultures.

To enable foreign universities to operate here, the Government plans to amend the University and University Colleges Act 1971.

"Appropriate conditions that are in line with the Government's policies and the nation's needs will be imposed on the foreign universities setting up branches here.

"At the same time, the position of the National Language will be given appropriate consideration."

ty's Vice-Chancellor Dr Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad.

The complex comprises seven blocks for the Universiti Malaya Undergraduates' Association and the 85 student bodies there.

The complex cost RM22.6 million, of which the Government allocated RM8.5 million and the rest came from the university fund as well as donations from students and the public.

Facilities include a sports centre, cultural centre, counselling unit, auditorium and bookstore.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had to allow foreign universities to operate locally as there were many Malaysians studying in institutions abroad.

He said previously their exposure to foreign cultures was meant to broaden their outlook and give them confidence.

"But today such exposure is no longer relevant and is also no longer profitable.

"It is better for more mature students and those who are not so easily influenced by foreign cultures to study abroad."

He said students who did their first degrees abroad learnt everything in a foreign language and there was no opportunity for them to learn any subjects on Malaysia or in Bahasa Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said this was because the Government could not impose any conditions on these foreign institutions.

He said the move had to be carried out as soon as possible as there were about 50,000 Malaysians studying in foreign languages abroad and they were not being exposed to anything beneficial.

Dr Mahathir said this at the opening ceremony of Kompleks Perdanasiswa at Universiti Malaya. Also present were Education Minister Datuk Dr Sulaiman Daud, chairman of the University Council Tan Sri Basir Ismail and the universi-

Citing reasons why the Government had to allow foreign universities to operate locally, Dr Mahathir said the Government could no longer afford to build more universities not just due to financial constraints but also because its current salary scheme was no longer attractive enough to draw the required academicians.

"Whatever is done, the cost of Government universities will continue to remain high compared with private universities and the

fees imposed are also less than those in the private sector.

"We cannot increase the salaries of the academic staff without also meeting the claims of other Government employees as a whole."

Dr Mahathir added that even if the Government

agreed to a pay rise, this would entail a loss of earning for academic employees and make their pay less attractive.

He hoped that with the explanation, all parties would understand why the Government was forced to make this decision.

Dr Mahathir said those

who could not afford the fees of the private universities could seek scholarships.

Dr Mahathir also said that it was important for students to not just specialise in religious studies but also pursue other courses relevant to the needs of the nation.

He said unless parents

and students realised this, the country would not be able to meet its manpower needs, particularly in the specialised field of science and technology and the people would be left behind in terms of progress.

"Universities can no longer be conservative by offering education and training

in a traditional manner with the belief that one who is knowledgeable in one field can master other areas and be efficient.

"If that is their attitude then they will become dinosaurs who perished because

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Need to avoid all forms of extremism

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they were unable to acclimatise with the changing environment."

He also said there was a need to avoid all forms of extremism and that culture and arts could not be abandoned.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said foreign universities which would be allowed to operate here would probably be those which Malaysian students

had found conducive for studies.

Asked if the foreign universities could meet the country's needs, Dr Mahathir added that it was up to the private sector.

"If the private sector sees opportunities here then it will open up more branches of foreign universities. In Malaysia the interest in education is obviously there.

"Parents are prepared to spend RM30,000 to RM50,000 a year to send their children

abroad. In Malaysia you only spend a fraction of that cost."

Dr Mahathir, who also had a closed-door meeting with the university's academic staff, said he had raised the matter of how they could interact with the private sector. He said a specific procedure for this would be worked out soon.

Dr Mahathir also explained the Government's policies and the role expected of universities.