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Victoria-Malay

MAHATHIR LAUNCHES THIRD OVERSEAS CHAIR OF MALAY STUDIES

By: Ali Mamat and Syed Jamil Jaafar

WELLINGTON, March 27 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today launched the Chair of Malay Studies, the first in the Australia-New Zealand region and the third of its kind in the world, at the Victoria University here.

The other two universities which have similar programmes are the University of Ohio in the United States and the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

Following the launching, the Prime Minister also witnessed the signing of agreements for the establishment of the Chair by the Director-General of Education Datuk Dr Johari Mat and the Chancellor of the university Douglas White.

The Chair was made possible through funding from the Malaysian and New Zealand governments, an endowment of RM500,000 by the Renong Group and the annual contribution from four foundations - the Ernslaw One (a subsidiary of the Malaysian-based Tiong Group), the Asia 2000 Foundation, Brierley Investments Ltd and New Zealand Post Ltd.

Also present at the ceremony were the Minister of Education Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and the Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

The university's Acting Vice-Chancellor Prof Chris Dearden said at the launching that the establishment of the Chair would contribute substantially to understanding and appreciation of the history, politics, language and other aspects of Malaysia.

'It will fit very harmoniously for example with our programmes in international relations and politics, Asian studies and Asian languages and many of our graduate programmes in the Commerce Faculty,' he said.

In his speech, Douglas said it was well recognised in New Zealand that a deep understanding of the major cultures of Asia is now essential for the public and private sectors who have dealings with the Asian region, and even the broader population there needs an increased appreciation of those cultures.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a four-day visit to New Zealand, leaves this capital city today for Lake Taupo, a famous tourism spot, for an overnight stay before proceeding to Auckland tomorrow. -- Bernama

AM YBY