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Najib-MSD
MSD TO BECOME "ONE-STOP AGENCY"

By: Wan A Hulaimi

LONDON, June 21 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Students Department (MSD) will be streamlined to become a "one-stop agency" to handle Malaysian students' affairs abroad, Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Najib Tun Razak announced here.

The restructuring of the MSD was in line with the new move by the government to reduce the number of Malaysia's teaching staff abroad and to expand institutions of higher learning in the country.

The new structure means that in future certain agencies which send their students here will no longer send their officers to manage the students' affairs.

"Students in the United Kingdom will only be handled by the MSD and this includes all students whether they are from Mara, Petronas, Telekom or any other agencies," Najib said at a press conference.

Following request from the agencies concerned, their officers now serving with the MSD would continue to serve here until their tenure of service here ended, he said.

"I have also emphasised that the MSD management should be constantly sensitive to the students' welfare," he added.

According to Najib, the MSD's income had increased from Stg72,254 in 1992 to Stg121,857 in 1995.

He said the MSD also had three units of flats behind the building which could become a source of income, although it was not the MSD's objective to make profit.

On the performance of Malaysian students in Britain, Najib said he was happy with their achievements.

"In the 94/95 academic year, 53 out of 955 students obtained first class honours, 202 obtained second class upper, while the rest obtained second class lower and others.

"Out of the 955 students, the results for 195 students were unknown. Thus, no less than five per cent of this group obtained first class honours. This is a good achievement," Najib said.

Although this year's results have not been received fully, the latest information received for medical students are: in the Royal College of Surgeons examination, 23 of the 24 candidates passed; at Trinity College, Dublin, two out of three candidates passed.

At the Trinity College also, three Malaysian students received the University College of Dublin (UCD) Award. Among them are two government scholars, Haslisha Muhammad Nor and Tay Swee Ho.

On the government's programme to reduce the number of students abroad, Najib said the reduction had already started as was done by Mara.

During his four-day visit to Britain, the Minister had been to Nottingham, Newcastle, Glasgow and London to meet with students. Najib had explained on the need to turn Malaysia as a centre for excellence in the field of education.

In this context, Malaysia must increase the number of educational institutions which will involve private institutions and supervised by a new council -- the National Accreditation Council which will be set up as soon as the relevant bill for its establishment are presented in Parliament in July.

Under the programme, Malaysia will cooperate with foreign universities to set up branch campuses locally which will not only take in local

students for first degrees, but also foreign students.

Najib said in Glasgow that this meant Malaysian students could pursue two years of their three-year course in Malaysia before proceeding for their final year abroad, and foreign students could pursue one year of their three-year course in Malaysia as a two-way programme as suggested by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Malaysia has about 17,000 students in Britain currently.

Asked whether universities here, which were increasingly dependent on income from abroad to sustain them, had expressed concern over this move, Najib said it was up to them to make the necessary adjustment.

"We are entering new forms of collaborations as part of our growing maturity in relationships," he added. -- BERNAMA

WAH AO