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Mahathir-Colleges

PRIVATE COLLEGES INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, SAYS PM

IPOH, July 4 (Bernama) -- The government agreed to the establishment of private colleges and universities in the country to increase opportunities for more Malaysians to further their education locally, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the move would also help reduce the outflow of foreign exchange.

The private sector has responded well to the government's encouragement by building more higher education centres which offer twinning programmes with foreign universities, he said before laying the foundation stone of the Asean-Sheffield Medical College here.

Dr Mahathir said the government is aware many parents cannot afford to send their children overseas to further their studies because of the high cost.

Bearing this in mind, the government encouraged the private sector to establish more colleges to increase opportunities for local students, he said.

Present at the ceremony were the Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Seri Ramli Ngah Talib and Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng.

The Asean-Sheffield Medical College, sited on 2.4 hectares, is scheduled to be completed in 1998.

It is jointly owned by Suci Teguh Sdn Bhd with an 80 per cent stake while University of Sheffield of Britain holds the remaining 20 per cent equity.

Suci Teguh is a subsidiary of Suci Teguh Holdings Sdn Bhd which in turn is owned by Yayasan Perak, VXL Holdings Sdn Bhd, Paramount Corporation Bhd and Gopeng Bhd.

Ramli, in his speech, said the government has agreed to give a RM5 million "soft loan" for the project through Yayasan Perak.

Suci Teguh director Lim Chee Wah said the college practises a "reverse twinning" concept under which students do a two-year pre-clinical course at University of Sheffield followed by another three years at the local college for their bachelor degree in medicine and surgery.

He said the college has accepted its first intake of 30 students who will leave for the University of Sheffield and return here in 1998 to complete their programme. -- BERNAMA

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