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European students welcome to study in Malaysia: Dr M

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says European students, particularly from Britain, are welcome to study in Malaysia.

"We assure you our universities will be just as good. You can provide some of the teachers and the external examiners.

"God willing, British students will learn to appreciate our value systems and be more friendly when they later work in the British Press or in the British Foreign Office.

"They might even learn how to understand and speak Malaysian English. I am sure Malaysia-British relations will benefit from this," he said at the Malaysia-British Society and British-Malaysia Society dialogue in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said it was decided at the Asia-Europe meeting in Bangkok last year that there was merit in European students in large numbers studying in Asian universities.

Dr Mahathir later witnessed the signing of a deal between Mara, the Bumiputera trust agency, and the British Government to set up a RM50 million technical institute to churn out professionals in multimedia, communications, electronic, and information technology.

The British Malaysian Institute, which will be in Kuala Lumpur, will offer programmes leading to Higher National Diploma (HND) awards of Edexcel Foundation/Business and Technology Education (BTEC).

The first intake of 330 students will begin in January 1999 and when fully operational the institute will have an enrolment of 1,000 students.

British Aerospace has been appointed project manager and will also manage "staff training" on behalf of the British Government. Other British companies such as BICC, GEC, Rolls-Royce and Vickers have made firm pledges to support the institute.

Mara chairman Datuk Othman Abdul and British High Commissioner to Malaysia David Moss signed the agreement.

Asked to comment on British-Malaysian relations, Moss said ties between the two countries are at a high level. "The hiccups are in the past," he told reporters.

"We believe that for the Malaysian companies Britain is the natural gateway into the European market and for British companies Malaysia is the natural gateway into this region," he said.

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