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Islamic and Asian civilisations study a must (HL)

Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The study of the main civilisations of Asia has been incorporated into the subject Islamic Civilisation which will be made compulsory in all public institutions of higher learning.

The Cabinet today gave its approval for "Islamic and Asian Civilisations" to be made a compulsory subject.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who announced this, said all undergraduates would have to pass the subject.

"It will be introduced after preparatory actions are taken ... probably in the next academic session."

He said the decision to include the study of Asian civilisations in the Islamic Civilisation subject was made after taking into account the views of various parties, including those of public institutions of higher learning.

This means besides Islamic Civilisation and Kenegaraan (Nationhood), undergraduates will also be studying Malay, Chinese, Indian and Japanese civilisations.

"The new component - Asian Civilisations - is introduced not because we want to water down the subject ... rather it is because we want students to look at the subject from a wider perspective," Najib said after his Ministry's post-Cabinet meeting.

Going by the fact that Malaysia is a multi-racial and multi-religious country, students would also learn to be more open, he added.

"Details of the course, including credit hours, course components, and the training of lecturers, will be decided by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Rectors of Public Universities/Institut Teknologi Mara."

More lecturers, Najib said, would have to be trained.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said on June 24 that Islamic Civilisation would be made compulsory for students in all public universities.

Abdul Hamid said students in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia and ITM were already studying it.

The Islamic Civilisation subject, Najib said, was introduced in 1983 upon Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's instructions.

The course requirements, however, differed among the universities.

"Some universities made it compulsory for all undergraduates to take the subject and pass. Some made it compulsory for all undergraduates to take the subject but made it compulsory only for Muslim students to pass.

"At other universities, the subject is only an elective one, and undergraduates need not pass. And then there are also universities where the subject is an elective but students were required to pass.

"We need to standardise the course requirements of the subject so that it will be more effective."

He said interest among non-Muslim students to study the theoretical aspects of Islamic civilisation, and vice-versa, had increased.

"People should, therefore, not be worried or suspicious of this move."

Najib said it would also be made compulsory for students of private institutions of higher learning to take Malaysian Studies.

"It will not, however, be compulsory for them to pass.

"We do not want to scare foreign students away with requirements which are too stringent."

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