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Najib-civilisation

ISLAMIC AND ASIAN CIVILISATIONS COMPULSORY COURSE NEXT YEAR

KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 (Bernama) -- All students of local universities are to take and should pass in a new compulsory course incorporating Islamic and Asian civilisation studies as from next year.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Cabinet today decided that Asian civilisation studies be tagged on to the Islamic civilisation course already offered by local tertiary institutions since 1983.

He said Islamic civilisation studies was introduced then by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed so that undergraduates, regardless of race or religion, appreciate Islam as an excellent civilisation.

"Although Islamic civilisation was long introduced, implementation-wise it differed from one university to another either in name or model," Najib told reporters after chairing his ministry's post-Cabinet meeting here.

The new course, he said, was aimed at familiarising university students with Islamic civilisation as well as that of Malay, Chinese, Indian and Japanese civilisations.

Najib said the course was also to nurture students' openness in accepting those civilisations in the context of a multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysia.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman recently announced a government decision making Islamic civilisation a compulsory subject for all university students.

The decision was made at a meeting of the Islamic Affairs Development Committee and the Islamic Consultative Body chaired by Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Certain sections of the population, non-Muslims in particular, took the announcement with apprehension, questioning the move to make the course compulsory for all under-graduates.

Najib said presently local universities offered four models of Islamic civilisation studies.

Some required all their students to take up and pass in Islamic civilisation, while others only made it mandatory for Muslim students to pass although all must still take it, he said.

Najib said there were also tertiary institutions which offered Islamic civilisation as an elective subject requiring a pass as against others which did not although they made it elective too.

Details of the new course would be finalised by the committee of public university vice-chancellors and rectors, he said.

These would include credit time, course components and lecturer training.

Najib said the main course component would comprise statehood, Islamic civilisation and key Asian civilisations as defined by the Islamic Affairs Development Committee and the Islamic Consultative Body.

Najib said: "The course will be conducted by academicians through exposure and discourse and not through indoctrination and also not dogmatic.

"Therefore no parties should be apprehensive over the government's move."

Asked whether the new course would create a matured society, Najib said: "I think they will be matured in inter-personal relations and prepared to assume the role of protagonists in the region.

"If we aspire to make Malaysia a developed nation in the region, obviously we would have to equip our people with knowledge of Asian civilisations to enable them to deal with other nations," he said.

Najib also said all students of local private tertiary institutions are required to take up and pass in Malaysian studies in the national language.

As for foreign students, although required to take the course, passing is not mandatory.

This relaxation would serve as an attraction for them to study in the country, he said.

"We have to be flexible if we want to woo them over here.... at least when they return home they are knowledgeable about our language, culture and constitution," Najib added. -- BERNAMA

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