

09 JUL 1997

Malay Studies

MALAY STUDIES CHAIR AT VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

By: Azman Hashim

WELLINGTON, July 9 (Bernama) -- The Malay Studies Chair at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) here will accept its first batch of students for the degree in Malay Studies in February next year.

Profesor Hood Salleh, who holds the Malay Studies Chair UVW, said the group of 15 students of various races would begin their studies in English at the Asia Studies Institute which would be under the university's Faculty of Humanities and Social Science.

He said so far the VUW had approved the "Asia 202 : Malay World and Civilisation" course which was taught to second year students after they had obtained six or 12 credit hours in other fields.

"After that we will follow it up with the Bahasa Malaysia course which we are preparing," he told Bernama after attending a meeting between Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat and Malaysian students studying at various universities here.

Mohamed, who is on a five-day visit to New Zealand since Sunday, arrived from Auckland yesterday to continue with his itinerary here.

Prof Hood, former associate director of the Institute of Environment and Development, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) said the first batch of Malay Studies Honours Graduates would emerge in four years from the date the course began.

Apart from the first degree students, the VUW Malay Studies Chair, had also accepted applications from three students for a course leading to the Masters degree and one for the Ph D, he said.

"So far I am the only lecturer but I have applied to get another person to teach the Malay language," he said.

He said it was important that knowledge of Malay was widened among people of Malay descent in the Asia and Pacific region as the language was used by 250 million people in the world.

"At the same time, we will also invite several lecturers from Malaysia particularly those able to give courses related to Malay Studies within a short period or able to conduct seminars or guest speakers," said Professor Hood who took up the post of Professor of the Malay Studies Chair at UVW in March this year.

He said the setting up of the Chair which was 40 per cent sponsored by the Government of Malaysia, 30 per cent by the New Zealand Government and the rest by Malaysian and New Zealand companies had also been pledged with financial help to the tune of NZ\$2 million (RM1.70 = NZ\$1.00) for the next six years.

Hood, who has been appointed Professor of the Malay Studies Chair of the UVW for a two-year period, said it was the second after the Malay Studies Chair at University of Leiden, Holland.

He said apart from teaching the Malay Civilisation, the Chair would also focus on the rapid development of Malaysia including the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), the country's dynamic leadership and the ability of the Malays in being major players at international level.

"I mean the Malays as well as the Bumiputera communities of Sabah and Sarawak," he said.

"We will show that Malay society and Malay civilisation could help mould a system of international values and could compete with other societies of the world," said the 54-year-old Professor who taught anthropology at UKM for 26 years before being appointed Professor of the

Malay Studies Department UVW.

He said the Chair would also contribute to efforts to link Malay researchers in the world particularly the many in the Asia-Pacific region.

Prof Hood said he planned to organise the "World Seminar on the Malay World" here next year to enable scholars in the Asia-Pacific region who were active in the Malay Studies to meet and exchange information.

He said other programmes of the Chair would be the Annual Malay Studies Lecture which would bring together experts from Australasia and Malaysia for studies for their mutual benefit.

Earlier, Mohamed advised the Malaysian students overseas to return to Malaysia after getting their degrees and contribute to the government's efforts to venture into advanced technology.

He said the knowledge and skills which they had acquired were very much needed in Malaysia as the government reduced dependence on foreigners particularly in developing the MSC.

"Let's together strive to realise the vision of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. As long as we do not switch to high technology we will continue to depend on labour intensive industries and foreign labour," he said.

From the aspect of politics, he hoped Malaysian students overseas would not be influenced by foreign news reports that there was a rift between the Prime Minister and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"Believe me, our country has strong political stability and our leaders are striving hard to bring development to the nation," Mohamed said. --

BERNAMA

AH AAM