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Najib-consortium

SET UP DISTANCE-LEARNING CONSORTIUM, NAJIB TELLS VARSITIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 13 (Bernama) -- Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has asked local public universities to set up a consortium to facilitate a common approach to distance learning.

"Through a consortium we can save substantial costs. If each university has its own approach, there will not be optimum use of infrastructure, communication facilities and the multimedia technology," he said.

Najib was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call that the Asian Association of Open Universities make distance learning transcend national boundaries of member countries.

The minister was approached by reporters on the issue after opening the 17th annual Southeast Asia Teachers' and Counsellors' Conference (SEATCCO) here today.

Najib, who already floated the consortium idea to vice-chancellors of local universities recently, said they were now preparing a paper on how all the universities could jointly carry out a common distance-learning programme.

He was also asked on the detention of a Universiti Malaya lecturer under the Internal Security Act for alleged involvement in the spread of deviant religious teachings detrimental to national security.

The ministry, he said, had always been cooperative to the Islamic Development Department and police in determining appropriate measures against propagation of deviant beliefs which threatened national security.

The government, he said, would not allow universities, as a centre for spreading knowledge and wider social interaction, be used for the propagation of deviant teachings.

Earlier, addressing about 1,000 conference participants from 10 countries, Najib said educational leaders need not fear but rather embrace change.

The three-day SEATCCO, organised by the International School of Kuala Lumpur, is aimed at furthering professional development in the field of education. -- BERNAMA

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