

EDITORIAL EXTRACTS

16 APRIL 1998

THE STAR says the 12,700 government sponsored students who are allowed to remain abroad to complete their education are a very fortunate lot.

Otherwise, their studies, not to mention their lives, would have been disrupted if they were required to return home to continue their studies.

After a review the government decided that the students could remain to complete their courses.

This is a good decision and the students can now concentrate on their studies.

STAR says the RM600 million to be spent for this purpose will be well worth it.

The students can repay the Government and society by excelling in their examinations and do their country proud.

It is hoped that the students will realise the gesture as valuable funds have to be diverted from elsewhere to finance their studies.

The money is also urgently required to fund many other essential projects which can benefit millions of Malaysians.

However, the English language paper said with a better educated and skilled workforce, the nation can be more competitive in attracting quality long-term foreign investment especially in high-tech industries. --

BERITA HARIAN comments on directive given by Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob to the state Fire and Rescue Services Department to take immediate action to put out the fires at 14 peat forest areas in the state.

The paper says the forest fires is serious particularly during the current dry season.

Forest fires further worsen the weather condition in the country, amidst the drought and water shortage problems.

BERITA HARIAN is worried by taking advantage of the situation outsiders may again indulge in smearing the good name of the country.

It is therefore important that Khalil's directive be given serious attention, says the daily.

The daily hopes other state governments would continue to take stern measures to prevent open burning.

"The state governments should also come out with effective preventive measures," BERITA HARIAN says.

The Malay daily suggests that officers from five government agencies -- the police, the local authorities, the firebrigade, the health ministry and the army should be given extra power as given to the Department of Environment officers to conduct and investigate open burning.

UTUSAN MALAYSIA touching on the announcement by Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar regarding water rationing to be carried out in six more areas in the Klang Valley starting Monday, said the message is clear that water problem is becoming critical.

The rationing will affect 1.2 million people around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

The Malay daily says under the current situation, the people do not have any alternatives but to support water rationing.

The public, from all walks of life and engage in whatever business should be determined to conserve water, Utusan says.

It says the public can learn a lot of lessons from present water crisis.

"Malaysia is endowed with ample water resources. As such water crisis as being experienced now should not have happened at all," concludes UTUSAN.

TAMIL NESAN writes about the historic peace accord signed by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Premier Bertie Ahern, last week to end the unrest in Northern Ireland.

The peace accord is expected to end the 30-year old bloodshed, bomb blasting, riots and other forms of violence and unrest which has taken some 32,000 lives in Northern Ireland.

Although the expectation is there but no one can deny it is not that easy to wipe out 30-year old violence in a shorter period.

The peace accord will face many testings before it can realise its goal, the paper says.

The conflict and animosity between the pro-British Protestants and pro-Ireland Catholics cannot come to an end that easily and that fast, the paper says.

The views and standings of the ordinary people, unionists and nationalists on the historic peace accord will be known only when the scheduled public poll is conducted on 22nd of next month.

The poll is a testing-time for the peace accord.

If the accord crosses the hurdle, then lasting peace can be expected in North Ireland, the paper says.

NANYANG SIANG PAU again touches on economic issues.

It says foreign companies which eye Asian markets should have confidence in the Asian economies.

They must have long term plans.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad says the tight credit situation in the country has begun to ease and the economy is stabilising.

An U.S. assessment consultancy firm also predicts that the economic situation in Asia will soon normalise.

The Chinese paper says the government has taken various measures to strengthen the financial system following the current economic turmoil.

It has allowed greater foreign equity in the telecommunications, insurance and securities sectors.

Thirty nine finance companies are also to be merged into eight core companies.

It is also inevitable for banks to merge into larger entities to face the challenges of globalisation.

The daily says the people are concerned over the financial system, particularly over the news that two major banks which suffered huge losses, required new capital injection.

The questions are:-

Have their capitals been wiped out?

Were the managements involved in any wrongdoing?

It says Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's directive that financial institutions are required to release their businesses index regularly would help ensure greater transparency.

CHINA PRESS says investments in educational softwares and hardwares are long term plans in line with the government's aim to turn the country into a regional education centre.

The government could upgrade certain colleges, like TAR and Mara Institute of Technology into universities to provide more opportunities to students to acquire higher education.

The daily is commenting on Education Minister Datuk Seri Njib Tun Razak's announcement that the Higher Education Fund has approved loans to 9,091 students. 58 percent of them are bumiputras and 42 percent non-bumiputras.

The fund is opened to students in 11 government universities and three private universities.

It says in its efforts to achieve educational excellence, the

government should allow more private universities to set up in the country.

Other than foreign universities, the private sector could also play a meaningful role in helping to produce more skilled people.

Bernama

16/04/98