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Ratings for all higher education institutions next year

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Local public and private higher educational institutions will be assigned ratings next year.

The institutions will be rated by the National Accreditation Board on, among others, their management, curriculum, teaching manpower, and the quality of education provided.

There are 11 public universities and 564 private higher educational institutions in the country.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who announced this today, said the board would start their evaluation next year and make their findings known within the year.

"The objective is to ensure higher educational institutions remain dynamic and competitive, and that they continually strive to fulfil the expectations of parents and students."

Najib said the board was an independent body and that it could choose to work with another organisation if required.

"Rest assured that there will be no political interference in the exercise."

Operational since Jan 1 last year, the board's core objective is to look at new or existing educational programmes before recommending their approval to the Ministry.

It is also responsible for evaluating whether an educational institution has achieved minimum standards.

Najib said all higher educational institutions would be directed to give the board their fullest co-operation.

"It is compulsory for all to be rated," he told reporters after opening a seminar on achieving world-class operational and administrative excellence for higher education at the Palace of the Golden Horses in Seri Kembangan, Selangor.

Over 60 representatives from local public and private higher educational institutions attended the seminar organised by the Ministry, Andersen Consulting and Peoplesoft.

The only time local higher educational institutions were rated was when Asiaweek magazine collated Asian universities in a 1997 survey.

In the survey, Universiti Malaya was ranked 11th among Asia's best 78 universities, which also listed Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia at 20th and Universiti Sains Malaysia at 49th place.

Another survey last year ranked these universities lower - UM was 33rd, USM 52nd and UKM at 53rd place.

Asked how the rating system would work and whether points or grades would be given to each educational institution, Najib said it would be announced later together with the criteria each university or college rated should have.

On whether the educational institutions would be rated annually, he said: "We would like to but there are several factors we have to consider like costs."

Najib also said the National Higher Education Council in a meeting last night had decided to accept a proposal to implement the e-university concept in all local public universities.

"The effort will be spearheaded by a committee headed by UM faculty of computer science dean Professor Mashkuri Yaacob.

"The objective is to introduce technology in all aspects of university

governance, including administration, student admissions and records, and the process of teaching and learning.

"The implementation will take five years. It is at present, slowly being introduced in the universities."

Najib added the move was in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to re-engineer the country's education system.

"We are confident that this concept will in the long run enable universities to increase their intake and provide education at a lower cost, and also increase productivity all round."

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