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Private varsities urged to set up education fund

PETALING JAYA, Fri. - Private higher education institutions have been urged to set up an education fund to help needy students who failed to gain entry into public universities to further their studies in such institutes.

Education Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Dr Mahadzir Mohd Khir, in making the call today, said this is necessary due to the higher fees at these institutes as the Government does not subsidise them.

He felt the institutes should take the initiative and not think of profits alone. He also said they were providing a complementary service in the education sector and the fund would be their contribution to society.

Speaking at the opening of the three-day Malaysian Education Fair at the Civic Centre, he said the institutes should cooperate and set standards among themselves especially in fees.

Asked by reporters later on the Education Ministry's proposal to introduce Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction in at least 50 per cent of subjects taught by the institutions, he said the ministry was still discussing the issue with the associations representing them.

He said the proposal did not mean that the 50 per cent target must be achieved immediately but rather gradually, so as not to cause any disruptions.

"The institutions can start off by using Bahasa Malaysia in 10 per cent of their subjects and raising it annually until it reaches the set target."

He said courses taught in Bahasa Malaysia might also be more attractive to local students.

"Foreign students will also not oppose this," he added.

"Even though some institutions offer 3+0 programmes, it doesn't mean everything has to be from overseas."

Asked about the lack of books in Bahasa Malaysia, he said there actually was enough of such books.

"The problem lies with the bookshops. They only place the English books prominently and the Bahasa Malaysia books will be in one corner."

Mahadzir said Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka should also play its part by aggressively promoting Bahasa Malaysia books.

National Association of Private Educational Institutions president Dr Mohd Thalha said the Private Education Department recently informed them that the ministry wished to have a progressive change to Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction.

Mohd Thalha said NAPEI, the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and the Association of Private Institutions of Higher Learning, Sarawak (Perintis), had sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last month outlining their positions on the proposal and the impact it would have, if implemented.

"In a franchised programme, external examiners would mark the papers.

"If it is not in English then it will be difficult. Answers will need to be translated first and the examiners can't do this."

Thalha said the plan would also hinder the Government's plan to make the country a regional hub for education.

The exhibition is organised by NAPEI and there are 60 exhibitors.

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