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`Tie-ups with foreign varsities important'

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EMPHASISING the importance of tie-ups between local and foreign universities, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said such a move will ensure the high standard of Malaysian education.

Through tie-ups with foreign universities and employing of external examiners, the standard of education can be maintained or enhanced, he told reporters after the official opening of University Tenaga Nasional (Uniten) yesterday.

"(Through) tie-ups with well-known universities, the chances of recognition are better (and it is) hoped that more will be done in that direction," he said.

Earlier in his speech, he said having external examiners will not only help Uniten remain a "world-class university", but its qualifications will also be accepted worldwide.

Dr Mahathir also called on all Malaysians to equip themselves with IT skills to face the challenges of globalisation, e-commerce and k-economy.

Elaborating on the knowledge that needs to be mastered, he said it comprises knowledge that is the "hardware", "software" and "knowledge that relates to applications we are exposed to".

He rejected charges that only certain groups of people or races are able to master certain knowledge.

Addressing students of Uniten, he said anyone could master knowledge if they put their minds to it.

"Knowledge means power. Those with knowledge will still have power in any society," he said, pointing to what was said by a Western leader: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely".

Meanwhile, he said while at times there are reports of unemployed graduates, there are also reports of job vacancies and employment opportunities.

"This is because there is a mismatch between the fields of study chosen and the skills required.

"While every student with his own interest should be given the opportunity to pursue his area of interest, students need to take into account the needs of the country," he said.

To reduce this mismatch, he said: "It is necessary to talk to the students before they enrol in the universities to explain what the job opportunities are.

"Sometimes, they go foreign countries to study subjects that interest them and come back to find there are no jobs for them," he said, adding that they then put the blame on the Government for the lack of jobs.

Bername reports: Dr Mahathir said yesterday the procedure for former opposition party members to join Umno will be tightened to ensure that only those who are loyal and who accept the principles of the party's struggle are accepted.

The Umno president said Umno did not want a recurrence of the tragedy whereby some people joined the party solely to "climb to the top" and did not have any loyalty to Umno and its struggle.

"We have to be more careful now of the kind of people we accept into the party," he said.

He was responding to questions about whether Umno was prepared to accept former leaders and members of Parti Keadilan Nasional, including its vice-president Marina Yusoff who left the party because of alleged

differences with Keadilan deputy president Chandra Muzaffar.

Dr Mahathir said before accepting any former opposition party leader or member, Umno must know their reasons for wanting to join Umno.

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