

07/05/2001

Reaching out to students abroad

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Our foreign missions will intensify their efforts to ensure that Malaysians who are studying or working abroad are well-informed of the situation back home.

This is in line with the recent call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the country's foreign diplomats to be more active in engaging Malaysian students abroad to counter the anti-Government propaganda being spread.

The New Straits Times spoke to ambassadors who are attending a six-day Head of Mission Conference, which began last Thursday. It is being held at the Palace of the Golden Horses in Seri Kembangan, near here.

Ambassador to the Philippines Mohd Arshad Manzoor Hussain said Dr Mahathir also told the ambassadors to safeguard the good name and image of the country.

"He also asked us to tell the world of the economic parameters of our country as it will then give others the true picture of what's happening here."

Mohd Arshad added that they were also told to give more attention to the welfare of Malaysians especially students.

"We will also go around more often to meet Malaysians to ensure their well-being," he added.

Ambassador to Kuwait, Datuk Ismail Mustapha, said the mission had always been close to Malaysians there.

"We are like one big family as the number of Malaysians there is very small."

He said there were only five Malaysian students there.

"Due to this, we do not have much problems."

Ambassador to Jordan, Abdul Jalil Haron, said there were about 1,500 Malaysian students there, with most majoring in either Syariah or Arabic studies.

"From the universities' feedback, we know that the students do not cause any trouble. The only problem that we know of is that of financial support, as most are private students."

"We have asked the Federal Government for its help in providing more loans to students," Abdul Jalil said.

He added that student numbers were also dwindling.

Former Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Wan Ahmad, who is now the ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said more dialogue sessions would be held with students there.

He said this would help keep the students well-informed of the latest developments back home.

"This will counter any attempts by others to influence our students."

He said the number of students in Saudi Arabia was also small. They are mainly in Medina.