

24 SEP 2002

Aziz-US

M'SIAN GOVT WILL CONTINUE SENDING STUDENTS TO STUDY IN US, SAYS AZIZ

MIRI, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- The government will continue to sponsor students to study in the United States despite increasing pressure to send them elsewhere following stringent conditions imposed by US authorities in approving student visas, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin said today.

He said the government had not decided whether to stop sending students to the US but government-sponsored students have the option to study elsewhere.

"We have many alternatives. Our students can study in Ukraine, New Zealand, Australia, China and even Russia," he told reporters after opening an international conference on higher education jointly organised by the Sarawak Development Institute and Miri branch of the Curtin University of Technology Sarawak (CUTS).

The three-day conference is attended by more than 150 academicians from more than 20 countries in conjunction with CUTS' official opening yesterday.

Aziz, however, said the government was not in a hurry to stop sending students to the US and would do its best to assist the affected students get their visas and complete their studies there.

He said the government had no plans to ask the affected students, who were mostly Muslims, to continue their studies in local universities.

"We have not identify any local university for them to continue their studies," he said.

Last week, Aziz said more than 150 Malaysian students, who returned home from the US during their semester holidays, could not continue their studies after the US government refused to issue them visas.

Following this development, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government would have to look for other alternatives if the US authorities did not change their policy on Malaysian students.

Aziz also said the government was monitoring activities of local university students due to strong suspicion that some of them could be members of the Jemaah Islamiah (JI) movement.

He said it was premature to confirm whether any local university student was involved with the movement believed to have close links with the al-Qaeda terrorist group.

-- BERNAMA

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