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Mahathir-Education

NO LET UP IN MONITORING OF PRIVATE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the government cannot and will not allow private educational institutions to be absolutely free of government supervision.

The Prime Minister said that this was because there was the danger of the unscrupulous offering education which was of low standards and even merely selling certificates, diplomas and degrees without bothering to conduct courses.

"A certain degree of competence must be determined for all educational institutions and obviously there must be adequate supervision," he said when launching the Open University Malaysia (OUM) here, today.

In this connection, he said that the setting up of a board of accreditation, Lembaga Akreditasi Nasional (LAN), was necessary even though some of the genuine and competent institutions might be irked by LAN's "interfering" in the running of such institutions.

Established in August 2000 as the country's seventh private university, OUM now has some 7,000 students and leverages on the quality and capabilities of its owners -- a consortium of Malaysia's 11 public universities.

Dr Mahathir said that in the end, it was for the good of the genuine institutions that LAN ensured standards were maintained so that they were free of the bad reputation brought about by the "fly-by-night" operators and their competition for students.

"It may be necessary, at a later stage, to charge for the certificates accorded the genuine institutions," he said.

On another note, Dr Mahathir said that with the need for more people to acquire knowledge, part-time education had become very important and open universities could easily accommodate the irregular time that part-time students needed.

He said that this way, workers could get an opportunity to get better education and qualification while they work.

"Clearly, there is a big role for off-campus distant learning institutions. It will probably become bigger than on-campus university education," he said, adding that it would help produce the knowledge workers so essential for the country's information technology (IT) and knowledge-based industries.

To extend the teaching of Science, Technology and Mathematics to off-campus students, the Prime Minister said that a field that required attention was the development of educational software.

Dr Mahathir said that in the past and even now, books and journals helped to make knowledge available to a bigger number of students but computer educational software would be able to do the job more effectively.

It was imperative, he said, that universities contribute to the teaching and development of software programming skills.

"There is no doubt that the country with the greatest number of software writers and engineers will help in the spread of knowledge. Universities cannot neglect this discipline if they want to be recognised as premier universities," he said.

The OUM is housed in the former Public Services Department Complex in Jalan Tun Ismail and has established 25 learning centres throughout the country.

In addition, it has made English as well as Entrepreneurship and

Professional Ethics compulsory subjects.
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