

Education must change together with economy

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Malaysia needs to undertake a holistic education reform in tandem with the transformation of the country's economy into an innovation-driven one, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said today.

NONE"As innovation is the key to our economic transformation, the education system must also move in the same direction.

"We have to further enhance the elements of creativity and innovation in the curriculum, in the teaching and learning process and in the system of assessment, with the aim of producing creative and innovative human capital," said Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, in his keynote address at the 4th Annual Malaysian Student Leaders Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

In his address, on "The Role of Education in Shaping the Future: The Realisation of 1Malaysia", he said the country's education system must be able to equip the young people, the country's future human capital, with the necessary knowledge and skills which will enable them to create and innovate.

He said this much-needed education reform would certainly produce the right human capital to move the country to the next level of economic development, which was driven by creativity and innovation.

Muhyiddin said the education reform would further improve the quality of schools and enable the young to unleash their true potential to be successful in the increasingly competitive global economy.

"At the same time, they will help spur economic growth by creating new wealth for the country and expand the economic cake, which will in turn make equitable distribution possible," he said.

He also said that reforming the education system would also help build a united Malaysian nation since the centre of this reform was the democratisation of education.

By providing and expanding quality education for all children, irrespective of race, there would be no feeling of alienation or racial prejudices as all Malaysian children would have equal right to quality education, he said.

He said raising the quality of the country's education also meant increasing the capacity of the multiracial citizens to uplift their social and economic well-being, which "will eventually eliminate the root cause of all conflicts and prejudices in future".

"This is certainly not wishful thinking. In the course of our nation's history, education has played a very important role in uplifting the lives of the poor and the needy, especially among the bumiputera community," he said.

Nation-building

Muhyiddin also pointed out that the country's education system also played an important role in enhancing nation-building and national unity, whereby the school was not only a

physical location for learning but also an agency of socialisation where children of all races could meet and interact.

In this respect, he said, the government had embarked on an effort to turn the national school into the school of choice for every pupil irrespective of race and "an effective agency of social cohesion and national unity".

"We do this by bringing together the children of all races under the national school system, which not only uses the national language as the medium of instruction but also caters to the specific needs of its multiracial pupils, including the pupils' need to learn their own language.

"Therefore, we intend to expand this policy further by introducing Mandarin and Tamil, the two major vernacular languages in this country, as elective subjects in national schools," he said, adding that this would provide greater opportunity for the children of all races to learn these two important languages.

The two-day summit, carrying the theme "Our Malaysia, Charting the Way Forward", is organised by the United Kingdom and Eire Council for Malaysian Students (UKEC) and is attended by about 350 Malaysian tertiary students and graduates from local and foreign universities.

- Bernama

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