

Improve English competency: Mustapa

PUTRAJAYA: Public institutions of higher learning (IHL) have been directed to improve the English language competency of their teaching staff.

This follows an initial finding of a study which showed a poor command of the language among university students, Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said.

The study, he said, was conducted not only among the

students, but also lecturers in all public IHLs. "This is in line with government efforts to produce quality graduates."

"In a study conducted of 120,000 IHL students last year, 29.2% were categorised in band 1 and band 2 – the lowest rating for the Malaysian University English Test," Mustapa told reporters after delivering a new year speech to ministry staff yesterday.

He also launched a book on the

ministry's code of ethics.

Mustapa said most universities, such as Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Malaya, had launched soft-skills modules, including an English language module, to produce employable graduates.

He said additional classes were held for students who have a poor command of the language.

Although lecturers were expected to be competent in

English, competency was emphasised only in certain fields.

"Not every lecturer needs to have a high level of competence in English. It depends on the discipline, especially science, engineering and technology.

"Overall, it (level of competence) is okay, but we want to know more precisely the overall level of competence, and in cases where the level is not up to the mark, remedial measures need to be

taken to ensure it is raised," Mustapa said.

On claims that two private IHLs were producing poor quality doctors, he said the National Accreditation Board and the Malaysian Medical Council were investigating the matter, adding that appropriate action would be taken if the allegations were proven to be true.

On the decision by the Human Resources Ministry to discontinue the training scheme for unemployed graduates, Mustapa said the introduction of soft-skills modules at IHLs last year was among the measures taken by the government to address the problem.

He said the ministry would also introduce entrepreneurial programmes in universities beginning this year to reduce students' dependence on the government for employment.

Yesterday, Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn was quoted as saying the training scheme for unemployed graduates would not be continued as it was burdening the government. – Bernama

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