

Nilai to be 'super' campus for teachers

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BANGKOK: The 27 teacher training institutes in Malaysia will be consolidated into one, with the RM1.3 billion Nilai education complex becoming the main campus and the rest as branches, Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said yesterday.

He said each branch would have its own niche area and speciality such as early education, special education and physical education, besides offering general teaching courses.

"It's the right time to co-ordinate and consolidate the institutes which have been operating as separate entities all this while. At least each one will have its own identity and ethos," he said.

Hishammuddin, here on a four-day visit to the country, said construction of the Nilai education complex on a 728.22ha site would be in two phases, with the first phase costing RM600 million.

He said as part of the ministry's move to address shortage of qualified teachers in Sabah and Sarawak, the teacher-training institutes in Tawau and Miri would be used to train trainees from the two states after which they would serve in the states, espe-

cially in rural areas.

Hishammuddin said the ministry would also share its expertise and experience with the Thai Education Ministry on upgrading the education system, especially in information and communications technology (ICT).

The minister said Thailand was also having problems with under-enrolled schools, currently estimated at 10,000 compared with Malaysia's 1,200, adding that both could work together to exchange expertise on how to overcome the problem.

Hishammuddin said his Thai counterpart, Wichit Srisa-an, would visit Malaysia next week to study Malaysia's Islamic religious school structure and ICT implementation in schools, with special emphasis on how they could adopt the system in schools in the southern provinces.

He said Malaysia would help, with the consent of the Thai government, and had no intention of interfering in its domestic affairs.

He said the country's leaders had asked Malaysia to assist them in the training and exchange of teachers and students, giving scholarships and capacity-building. — Bernama