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'Our education system has come full circle'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia aims to increase the number of foreign students studying in the country to 100,000 by 2010 from the current 50,000, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

To date, students from more than 150 countries are studying in Malaysia, making the country one of the most important providers of international education, together with other countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Abdullah said education in Malaysia could be said to have come a full circle after 50 years of independence.

This was because while the country used to send most of its students abroad and was still sending some, an increasing number of foreign students were coming to study here, he said at the official opening of the Limkokwing University London and its London campus in Piccadilly.

The text of his speech was released here. Present were president of Limkokwing University of Creative Technology Tan Sri Lim

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

Kok Wing and the Malaysian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Datuk Abdul Aziz Mohammed.

Abdullah, who arrived in London on Sunday from New York where he had addressed the United Nations General Assembly last week, paid tribute to Lim and Limkokwing University for their overseas initiative.

He said it was also a proud moment for Malaysia because the establishment of the university in London marked the first time a Malaysian university had suc-

ceeded in expanding its reach to the United Kingdom.

In this respect, the prime minister urged more Malaysian universities with the requisite criteria to go international and open overseas campuses.

The government would continue to support such initiatives.

Malaysia, the prime minister said, aspired to become a regional centre of excellence for education.

Crucial to the country's success in this area would be the role of Malaysian private sector universities and colleges because they en-

rolled the bulk of foreign students, he added.

"It is also one branch of education where we see much dynamism and innovation," he said, but in order to ensure success, the quality of education must be of the highest standard.

"No compromises must ever be made on this. This is the only way to compete and be among the best in the world."

Abdullah said when he opened Limkokwing University's main campus in Cyberjaya three years ago, he had expressed the hope that it would develop into one of the best in the world.

He said he was pleased to see that it had gone some way towards that aspiration as it had been recognised as one of the leading universities of its kind, with campuses in six countries on three continents, with a total enrolment of 16,000 students.

It has also built up a collegial network of more than 160 universities and colleges spread over more than 70 countries. — Bernama