

A level higher for sports education
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SEREMBAN: Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said it was the government's aim to bring the nation's education to a level of "par excellence" in line with its vision of producing a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce by 2020.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said excuses like lack of facilities and teachers were no longer acceptable as the government had taken steps to overcome these with the launch of its School Improvement Programme last year.

"Just look at SK Ulu Lubai in Limbang, Sarawak. Despite its location in such an interior region and with only 100 students, the school is among the high performing ones in the country.

"All schools in the country must aim for such excellence ... our target for educational achievements should no longer be 100 per cent, but 110 per cent," he said.

Speaking at an academic dialogue with teachers, here, today, he said various other initiatives had also been taken towards achieving educational excellence, including the introduction of the Linus programme in primary schools last year.

The aim of the Linus programme is to assist students who were weak in reading, writing and counting.

Muhyiddin had earlier launched the Raja Melewar Sports Teachers Training Institute, which is the first of its kind in the country to train teachers to become coaches and technical officials.

Two other designated teachers training institutes, the Perlis Teachers Training Institute and the Tun Abdul Razak Teachers Training Institute in Sarawak were also simultaneously upgraded as Sports Teachers Training Institutes during the launch.

"At present, only about 20 - 30 per cent of our workforce is skilled, while the others are mostly SPM holders who did not further their education.

"To achieve our visions, we must give more focus towards producing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce for the future. The burden of this falls on those in the education industry - right down from school teachers to lecturers ... each of you play an important role in shaping the future human capital," he said.

He said teachers must be highly skilled and qualified and able to effectively and creatively pass on knowledge, while parents must also play a significant part in shaping their childrens' future.

"Under the new budget (2012), the government has allocated RM80 million for about 20,000 teachers who are diploma holders to upgrade themselves and obtain a degree," he added.

Earlier in his speech, Muhyiddin said the launch of the Sports Teachers Training Institutes were in line with the government's one student, one sport policy.

"Each student must participate in at least one sport in school. This would help make the student more well-rounded, disciplined and self-confident, while also enhancing racial integration," he said.

Meanwhile, during the dialogue session with teachers, he dismissed claims that the Education Ministry practiced favouritism when awarding recognition to certain schools and that it was based solely on a school's achievements.

"It is unfair to make these allegations when there is no such proof. If anyone has proof that our system has been manipulated, then please give it to me and I will personally look into it," he said.

He also said his ministry was prepared to look into a proposal that only students who attended 80 per cent of classes during the academic year be allowed to sit for the SPM examinations.

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