

Putting Malaysian Education On The World Map
Bernama
March 17, 2013

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 (Bernama) -- The government's aspiration of achieving its target of 200,000 international students by 2020 has been given a boost through the establishment of a dedicated agency to champion and lead the development and promotion of Malaysia's education and training products and services internationally.

The new agency, Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and is operating under the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).

EMGS is also tasked to lead Malaysia's development to become a leading global hub for education and training by 2020.

EMGS will be operating a one-stop centre to provide an integrated international marketing and promotion for education and training as well as a single interface for foreign student pass application, processing and issuance.

The agency has been given the mandate to attract more international students and to increase the efficiency of the student visa application process in order to cope with the expected inflow of international students to Malaysia.

"EMGS in its charter to clients has clearly stated that all completed foreign student visa applications shall be processed within 14 working days from the date the completed applications are received.

Since commencing operations on February 1 this year, we have delivered on that and even managed to process some applications well short of the promised time frame," said EMGS chief executive officer Yazid Hamid in a statement today.

He added that EMGS was established to address the needs of both international students and institutes of higher education (IHEs) in Malaysia.

"Aside from making it more convenient for international students, the major shift in the speed of delivery of student visas will in fact help Malaysian IHEs to plan better and increase their student intake drastically," he said out.

Yazid said how soon an international student comes to Malaysia to take up a course after being offered a place by the IHE depends very much on how fast the visa approval letter can be secured.

"In the past, it has always been a back-to-back arrangement between the IHEs and the approving agencies. This has resulted many times in last-minute approvals that have caused us to lose 15 to 20 per cent of international students, which has had an impact on the IHEs' revenue and affected Malaysia's image as an education destination. EMGS' role in the quick approval of visas will mitigate this," he said.

All international students applying for student visas through EMGS will be subject to a standard processing fee.

"EMGS is a company limited by guarantee that has been set up to be a self-sufficient

organisation. We only received an initial start-up grant from MOHE, and we need to generate our own income to be able to implement our strategy for bringing in more students.

"So far, the cost of marketing Malaysia as an education destination and processing international visas has been borne by the Government and indirectly, by the taxpayer. The fees collected by EMGS will not only be deployed to sustain operations at its one-stop centre, but also for marketing Malaysian education and training products overseas," said Yazid.

He said that aside from faster approvals, EMGS processes and procedures would allow for more stringent monitoring of foreign students in Malaysia.

"We will have all relevant information relating to an international student's stay in Malaysia, such as the institution, duration of the course, date for renewal of visa and so on. Our system will allow us to track each foreign student who comes through EMGS, which will help to curtail the abuse of foreign student visas and curb fraudulent activities committed by foreign students coming in under false pretences," Yazid said.

EMGS also aims to ensure the well-being of foreign students in Malaysia through compulsory medical insurance.

The implementation of compulsory insurance coverage is also to protect international students by giving them the means to pay for private healthcare that might otherwise be beyond their means.

In the interest of providing international students with premium insurance cover at reasonable prices, EMGS has negotiated for a group/volume package on behalf of the international students through an open and transparent procurement procedure whereby leading international insurance companies based in Malaysia as well as local insurance companies were invited to participate.

Using this approach, EMGS will ensure that a standardised and affordable premium is offered to all international students with a guarantee that they receive comprehensive coverage and proper healthcare during their stay in Malaysia.

"In the past we had international students who took up insurance policies at very low premiums. However, these did not afford them comprehensive protection and proper healthcare during their stay here, which resulted in the students feeling short-changed.

"This ultimately affected the students' well-being when they fell sick. To circumvent this, we selected one company that met all the criteria including a standard premium that offered comprehensive coverage," he said.

This will also ensure that the foreign students do not burden the public health service which is heavily subsidised by the Government for the benefit of Malaysian citizens and paid for from tax payers' money.

"This compulsory insurance actually has a two-pronged objective: to take care of international students through illness and accidents and to reduce the burden on the Malaysian public healthcare system," Yazid said.

On his plans for EMGS, Yazid said his aim is to make the agency a force to be reckoned with

in terms of fulfilling the Government's objective of championing Malaysia's international education brand under the education NKEA (National Key Economic Area) of the Economic Transformation Programme.

"We need to ask how we can direct international student traffic to Malaysia and provide the solution through our capabilities. We are positioning EMGS to be an industry promotion agency, very much like MDEC and Tourism Malaysia are for their respective industries. Ultimately, we exist to enhance efficiencies and results for all our stakeholders," he said.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2013 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/newsindex.php?id=935037>