

Malaysia, Japan Widen Educational Cooperation

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

TOKYO, March 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Japan today signed a memorandum of cooperation especially in terms of higher education in both countries which will be extended to the lower level especially in technical and vocational fields.

At the signing Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also the education minister, while Japan was represented by its minister of education, culture, science and technology, Hakubun Shimomura.

Muhyiddin said the memorandum of cooperation was an extension to the existing cooperation in higher education where the cooperation this time would also involve basic education.

"We need a framework for cooperation in basic education, from the pre-school stage right up to pre-university level. This is provided for in the new memorandum signed today.

"It provides for a rather wide area for us to look into and for Malaysia to emulate in order to enhance the quality of education in our country," he said at a media conference at the conclusion of his four-day visit to Japan, Monday.

For example, he said, the fields of science, technology and engineering had been emphasised by Malaysia and should be further improved.

"Japan certainly has a wider experience in terms of education in the fields of science and technology compared to us. How to balance the situation in Malaysia. This has to be studied by my officers at the co-curriculum division. Make sure it is suitable.

"There are many other areas apart from higher education, such as research and development in raising the ranking of (our) universities. There are specific areas, niche areas, their field of specialisation is far ahead compared to Malaysia and the other more developed nations," he said.

Muhyiddin said that during the discussion with Shimomura, the minister suggested that both nations explored a wider area in education especially in vocational and technical fields.

"These are fields that are being emphasised by both countries. We agreed that officials from both countries should scrutinise further the areas of specialisation that we can cooperate in," he said.

Meanwhile, the deputy prime minister said Malaysia already had a blueprint in early education launched two years ago so that such education would be on par with the

developed nations.

"As for higher education, we are at the final stage of coming up with a blueprint. It will be launched on April 7. In the blueprint, we have outlined several major shifts...there are 10 items. With the new initiative, we can further develop the standard of education to be on par with the developed nations," he added.

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