

Country on track as educational hub

Abdullah praises private sector's role

By Hamidah Atan
news@nstp.com.my

SEREMBAN, Thurs. — The Government is satisfied with the role and involvement of the private sector in making Malaysia a regional hub for educational excellence.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said judging from the sizeable population of international students enrolled in local institutions of higher learning, Malaysia appeared to be on the right track towards achieving the objective.

A recent study conducted on international students by an education publication revealed that there were about 23,000 foreign students from more than 115 countries studying in the country between the end of 1999 and last year.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said of the number, 11,000 were in private tertiary institutions. Current foreign students population in private institutions was estimated at between 12,000 and 15,000.

Abdullah said this at the official opening of Inti College Malaysia in Nilai near here. His speech was read by Rural Development Minis-

ter Datuk Azmi Khalid who represented the Deputy Prime Minister.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad, State Speaker Datuk Muhammad Shahlan Shaid, Inti welfare foundation chairman Tengku Tan Sri Ahmad Rithauddeen Tengku Ismail and the college's president Tan Yew Sing.

Abdullah praised Inti College for having attracted more than 2,200 foreign students at its campuses nationwide.

He said education in the country was geared towards the creation of a progressive society.

"As such, concerted efforts have continuously been made to widen the people's access to education:

"Allocations made for education under the various development plans have always been substantial. The Government notices that the country's growth and prosperity can be largely attributed to its continued investment in education."

Abdullah also said the Government allocated RM22.7 billion for both education and training under the Eighth Malaysia Plan against RM10.19 billion under the Seventh Plan.

"Having taken stock of our achievements so far, we must now plan for the future. The way forward for Malaysia is to ensure the fulfilment of the country's development blueprint, Vision 2020, which charts the country's course to becoming a fully developed nation.

"Emphasis on education will continue to be the main ingredient for our success and I assure you there will be no let-up on this."

Abdullah added that the Government alone could not produce the critical mass of knowledge workers needed to fuel the economy.

"We appreciate and applaud the proactive approach of private institutions like Inti College, which offers world-class academic programmes and produce industry-relevant graduates.

"It is important that the education received by students is holistic in nature and prepares them for life.

"We do not want graduates who merely regurgitate the knowledge they receive while in colleges or universities. The nation urgently requires highly skilled people with a global mindset who are bold and can configure knowledge and apply them in a wide range of contexts."