

UMS to increase intake of foreign students

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By Murib Morpi

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has sealed a partnership with Asia e-University (AeU) to further expand its online distance learning (ODL) programmes.

The university inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the new partner yesterday, aiming to increase the intake of its international students by better promoting its Postgraduate Master Programmes through AeU.

Under the agreement, two ODL programmes, namely the Master of Human Capital Management (School of Business and Economics) and Master in Education Management (School of Education and Social Development), will be offered starting January next year.

UMS vice-chancellor Brigadier General Professor Datuk Seri Kamaruzaman Amon said the MoU paved the way for further collaboration with AeU, especially in promoting ODL programmes to foreign countries.

He added UMS was looking towards offering more programmes from its other schools through AeU in the near future.

"The significance of this MoU would be to encourage the expansion of our online distance learning programme globally in the industry of higher education, with AeU as a gateway university to develop and expand ODL programmes, thus generating impact towards our national economy," he said.

Kamaruzaman said besides increasing the intake of international students in UMS, the move was also



Kamaruzaman (second left) exchanging the document with Ansary, witnessed by Datuk Dr Yee Moh Chai (centre) yesterday.

consistent with the national agenda to promote Malaysia as the regional international hub.

"This would be reachable with the MoU with AeU today, where AeU will assist us in promoting the ODL programmes through online portal as well as providing the technical training and expertise in handling the online lectures and learning activities to our academic staff who are involved directly in the ODL programmes," he added.

AeU is a flexible, international university set up in Asia under the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). Its establishment is an initiative of Malaysia as the prime mover for e-education, with the support of 31 ACD member countries.

Headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, AeU collaborates with higher learning institutions and training centres in the 31 ACD member countries to offer

academic and professional training programmes focusing on affordability, accessibility, and quality.

The institution has been commissioned by the government to collaborate with higher learning institutions in Malaysia to promote Online Distance Learning (ODL) and under this initiative, every higher learning institution is required to identify and develop two ODL programmes by end of 2011.

The signing was witnessed by State Resource Development and Information Technology Minister Datuk Dr Yee Moh Chai, where Kamaruzaman represented UMS and AeU was represented by its president, Professor Datuk Ansary Ahmed.

Ansary said Malaysia is currently ranked the 10th most popular destination for foreign students in the world, and promoting ODL programmes is another

effort to climb up the rank besides increasing the number of foreign students coming and studying in the country.

He said among the regions the country has targeted to reach out to are Asean, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the Indian sub-continent and Africa.

"Malaysia has a target of reaching 110,000 online students by 2020; we have a big task, this will not be successful if we as institutions and academicians cannot work together," Ansary added.

UMS is the seventh public higher learning institution (IPTA) which AeU has ventured with in providing Malaysian education online.

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Dr Yee said it was in line with the country's effort to better equip itself to meet the challenge in creating proper human resource development through education.