

Unis have bigger role to produce highly skilled human capital

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KOTA KINABALU: Universities need to meet challenges in equity, quality, relevance, ownership and international networking to achieve excellence in higher education, said Deputy Chief Minister, Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

“Universities need to churn out highly skilled labour to meet the said challenges,” he said when declaring open the South-East Asian Association for Institutional Research Conference (SEAAIR) 2012 here yesterday.

The three-day conference is organised by the School of Education and Social Development of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

Pairin added that creating knowledge was no longer just within an institution but transcended geographical and institutional boundaries which has compelled higher institutions of learning to play a bigger role in nurturing and sustaining excellence in human capital.

“This process known as the Consumerisation of Digital Services involves talented and committed individuals in knowledge innovation. Thus, higher education institutions play a major role in nurturing and sustaining the

excellence of its human capital,” said Pairin.

However, he pointed out that while it is important to think globally, one also need to act locally.

The Malaysian government has therefore taken initiatives to create an international brand for Malaysian higher education.

One is to foster collaborations involving the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources, private education institutions and other government agencies to maximise limited resources.

In ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in universities, the Ministry of Higher Education has proposed that 75 per cent of academic staff in research universities and 60 per cent in public universities should hold PhD degrees.

The Academic Training Scheme has been introduced to upgrade the qualification of university staff and the National Professors Council was introduced in April 2010 to provide input to the government.

Furthermore, the government has launched a programme known as MyBrain15 to produce 60,000 PhD holders by the year 2020.

“These initiatives are expected to produce



Pairin (left) beats a gong to mark the opening of SEAAIR 2012 at the Promenade Hotel in Kota Kinabalu.

critical mass needed for economic growth through research and innovation, thus creating an educational brand for Malaysia,” said Pairin.

Meanwhile, the vice chancellor of UMS, Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah in his speech said knowledge innovation had become the most important issue in the advancement of knowledge in the 21st century.

“In a world without borders, a nation with knowledge innovation edges other nations in economic and social development. Thus, the theme of the conference this year ‘Culturalising Excellence in Higher Education’ comes timely in addressing this issue,” he said.

He was represented by deputy vice chancellor of UMS for research and innovation, Prof Dr Shahril Yusof.

SEAAIR 2012 is the 12th annual conference with participation from South East Asian countries as well as from Europe and the Middle East.

More than 100 papers were accepted and will be presented at the three-day conference during which delegates will engage in presentations and discussions on institutional strengths and capabilities; the quest for quality higher education; benchmarking in higher education as well as sharing best practices and exemplary case studies in the higher education sector.