

UMS is urged to set up Faculty of Islamic Studies

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KOTA KINABALU: A Faculty of Islamic Studies in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) will empower the spread of Islamic education in Sabah.

Assistant Minister to the Chief Minister Datuk Mohd Arifin Mohd Arif, who mooted the faculty proposal, said UMS which has shown interest is currently carrying out a study to look into the suggestion.

"I truly hope that the proposal would become a reality as creating such faculty in UMS will be another initiative to strengthen Islamic education and knowledge in Sabah.

"I am hoping to see the message of Islam further strengthened through the education sector in the State," he said.

Arifin, who is in charge of Islamic affairs in Sabah, said this to reporters after witnessing the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Sabah Islamic Affairs Department (Jheains) and Malaysia Islamic Development Department (Jakim) on Islamic education here on Wednesday.

The MoU focuses on education collaboration between the two departments on studies involving the reciting and memorising of the Al-Quran at Sabah Maahad Tahfiz Al-Quran Wal-Qiraat (Institution of Memorising and Reciting the Holy Al-Quran in Sabah) and Darul Quran Jakim campus at Kuala Kubu Baru, Selangor.

Jheains director Abdul Halim Nayan signed the MoU document witnessed by Sabah Maahad Tahfiz principal Ustazah Hiriyanti binti Tabin while Jakim was represented by Darul Quran Jakim director Ustazah Zawanah binti Muhammad witnessed by its deputy director Ustazah Kamariah Abdullah at the event.

Also present were Sabah Mufti Ustaz Bungsu @Aziz bin Jaafar, Jheains Principal Assistant Director (Education Division) Saif@Shaiffuddin bin Daud and others.

Arifin said he has highlighted the proposal twice at the Umno General Assembly and few times at the sitting of the State Legislative Assembly.

By having such faculty in UMS, he said students would have options to pursue their Islamic studies including on memorising and reciting the Al-Quran in the uni-

versity here apart from the universities in Middle Eastern countries like Egypt.

On the MoU, Arifin said the State Government is very fortunate that it is renewed for the second time as the long-term cooperation is reviewed every five years.

He said a total of 62 graduates have been produced from the Sabah Maahad Tahfiz Al-Quran here since 2005 with some of them working with Jheains, and schools, among others, and others pursuing Islamic studies overseas.

Meanwhile, Zawanah said Jakim through Darul Quran Campus is awaiting approval on its application for the Diploma programme to be recognised and accredited by the Malaysian Qualification Accreditation (MQA) agency under the Education Ministry.

She said they have submitted the application to MQA so that students would not face any obstacle when they wish to pursue their studies at a higher level in public higher learning institutions in the country or overseas.

"Actually the diploma has been recognised by the National Accreditation Board (LAN) under the Public Service Department (PSC) but due to the dynamics of education where all education programmes must get MQA recognition, we decided to follow suit for better recognition of our Islamic studies programme.

"The result will be out in six months' time from the MQA on the diploma. We have just received approval from the Malaysia Skills Development Department (JPK) under the Human Resource Ministry to issue standard 'Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia' (SKM) level 3 for the tahfiz students who are taking certificate level studies.

"By doing so, the students with the certificates who have no academic qualifications to enter the public sector could have the opportunities to work in other aspects like management and administration of mosques. But the most important thing is that the Tahfiz education in the country is being recognised," she said.

Zawanah said JPK has also agreed to provide funds for diploma level equivalent to level 4 SKM and degree equivalent to level 5 SKM at Darul Quran.