

# ASEAN

## UK TO BOOST QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SE ASIA

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Britain has become the latest associate member of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (Seameo), and is reaching out to help the region lift its quality of education.

The UK government has prioritised collaboration with Southeast Asia in the areas of capacity-building in vocational and technical education, English language education, mobility and exchanges of lecturers, professors, researchers and students, development of world-class learning and research capabilities, and technology transfer in science education and innovation.

The UK has become the eighth associate member, after Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Spain. The UK's application was approved at the 47th Seameo Council Conference, attended by education ministers and high-level education officials, being held in Hanoi.

Since 1973, associate membership of Seameo has been open to any country willing to promote cooperation among Southeast Asian nations through education, science and culture. Member countries have made financial and technical contributions and expertise to the development of education, science and culture of the Southeast Asian countries, through the mandate of 21 Seameo Regional Centres.

"I believe UK's educational strength will make a great contribution to education, culture and science in Southeast Asia, to promote human resources development in the region," said Pham Vu Luan, Vietnam's Education and Training Minister, who was yesterday elected the new president of the Seameo Council. Thai Education Minister Phongthep Thepkanjana was elected Seameo's vice president.

The centrepiece of the Hanoi conference is a policy forum titled "Life-long Learning: Vision and Policy", with a Centre for Lifelong Learning recently established in Vietnam as Seameo's 21st and latest regional centre. This centre will specialise in research and training for learning as a foundation for educational policy and development.

The conference also saw the launch yesterday of the Seameo College programme, which will offer education ministers, educators, practitioners and even students a platform to share their ideas and practices on education, science and culture, as well as receive training. The college programme is a flagship initiative in Seameo's bid to become more efficient and responsive to the region's fast-changing education needs.

"The college will respond to a changing context of regional cooperation in education and human resources development, namely the urgent need accelerate the process of building an integrated Asean Community," said Andrew Head, deputy country director of Asian Development Bank (ADB), which funds the programme.