Brunei education minister assumes role of 46th Seamec president

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BRUNEI'S Minister of Education has been elected as the president of the 46th Southeast Asian Minister of Education Organisation Council (Seamec) yesterday.

Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Kerna Dato Seri Setia Hj Abu Bakar Hj Apong took over the duties from former president Armin Altamirano Luistro FSC, the secretary of Education from the Philippines.

In his inaugural address to the council, the minister pledged to sustain the effective leadership of the outgoing president in steering Seamec to more successful undertakings ahead.

"The Seamec will continue to address priority areas of organisation, including initiatives to modernise member countries' education base from primary school to university level," he said.

He added that they will continue to train the region's new generations, who will be future leaders in various fields.

Pehin Dato Hj Abu Bakar hoped that the proposed meeting protocol of Seamec Council Conference and officials meeting will provide the necessary guidelines for Seamec's future conference and meetings.

"The possibility of generating synergy between Seamec Secretariat and ASEAN Education Ministers' Meeting as well as other organisations, especially in networking and partnerships," he said.

He added: "There is also a need to avoid duplications and really focus on regional needs."

The minister said the inaugural Ministerial Round Table Meeting, which will be held today, is hoped to enhance the ministerial role by providing a platform for inspiring dialogue and open discussions on issues relevant to Seamec's objective.

As the host of this year's conference and meeting, the minister will not only assume the presidency, but will be chairing the Sixth ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting in 2011.

The election took place during the first of three plenary sessions during the four-day conference.

Brunei will also chair a policy forum on education. Themed "A Transformation in Vocational and Technical Education - The Way Forward", the meeting will discuss challenges and issues related to vocational and technical education.

Meanwhile, Pehin Dato Hj Abu Bakar yesterday met Singaporean Minister of Education and Second Minister of Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen.

During the bilateral meeting, the ministers discussed efforts in running programmes such as Teachers Immersion Programme, student education exchanges, teaching of Malay language, twinning and leadership programmes, technical education, co-curricular activities and higher institutional linkages, according to a press statement from Ministry of Education.

Both ministers agreed to further strengthen the current cooperation through the next Joint-Working Group meeting which will involve more Singaporean teachers to be attached to Ministry of Education.

The Singaporean minister is in Brunei to attend the 46th Seamec Council Conference and Sixth ASEAN Meeting from January 26-29, 2011.