Crown Prince upholds SEAMEO’s milestones

By Siti Hajar and Hamidah Ismail

AS CHALLENGES and demands in education continue to grow, foremost among them is the need for our educational systems to be able to respond creatively and effectively to the dynamic needs of our developing economies and the consequent demand for skilled workforces and professionals.

His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office, underscored the challenges educational systems face in a sabda as he officiated the opening of the 46th SEAMEO Council Conference at The Empire Hotel and Country Club in Jerudong, yesterday morning.

Addressing the 11 education ministers from the SEAMEO member countries, His Royal Highness said, “Horizons of education must be sufficiently broad enough to provide a scope and quality of skills that allow our people to work both domestically and beyond the borders of their nations” especially “in this day and age of globalised workforces”.

Above: Crown Prince delivers his sabda. Right: HRH officially opens the conference as the Minister of Education looks on. (See also Page 5)

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His Royal Highness also lauded the efforts that have been undertaken by SEAMEO, which has worked tirelessly to establish a comprehensive web of professional networks and partnerships regionally as well as internationally.

SEAMEO, the Crown Prince said, has “facilitated the achievement of significant milestones in collaborative education throughout our region”. With the continuous training and exchange programmes that are being carried out, and the collaboration with UNESCO on Education for All initiatives, the region is currently on the right track towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals that have been predetermined by UNESCO.

The promotion of and emphasis on early childhood education as well as technical and vocational education, were also commended by His Royal Highness as he pointed that both areas are considered “crucial as they represent key milestones in the education of our people”, especially for young children who will soon begin formal education and for those who have interests in pursuing technical and vocational education as “alternative pathways to higher education and future careers”.

Technical and vocational education, said His Royal Highness, “has the potential to provide individuals from all walks of life, with essential skill bases that are critical to building human capacity and thus can play a substantive role in helping our nations meet their requirements for industrial and economic development”.

Describing the ASEAN education sector as a “regional bridge that interconnects both people and nations”, HRH said that its role is in the midst of helping ASEAN to realise its vision of a progressive ASEAN community that works together to meet common challenges.

“Education represents a fundamental contributor to ASEAN’s ability to consolidate its position as a dynamic and vibrant regional grouping that is prepared to play a substantive role in global political and economic affairs.”

In 2015, SEAMEO will celebrate its 50th Anniversary and, as the body is approaching its 50th year of establishment, His Royal Highness stressed on the importance of “maintaining the relevance of its work in tackling the challenges at hand and in anticipating future demands in education within our region” whilst preserving, strengthening and upholding the region’s cultural values and heritage.

Apart from its significance in facilitating deliberations and discussions amongst regional governments pertaining to education, the annual conference, said His Royal Highness, is an opportunity to review and gain an appreciation for the work undertaken by SEAMEO “in utilising education as a key mechanism to enhance greater regional cooperation and understanding whilst also developing the many social, economic and cultural ties between the peoples of our part of the world”.

His Royal Highness wished the ministers success for the three-day meeting as well as the best for the organisation’s future work.