Identifying learning skills required for the 21st century

Minister of Education stresses on the need to be prepared in facing diverse challenges of the rapidly changing world

By Hamidah Ismail

His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office yesterday officiated the opening of the 46th Southeast Asian Minister of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Council Conference and the 6th ASEAN Ministers of Education (ASEM) meeting at the Indira Samudra Grand Hall of The Landmark Hotel in Kuching.

In his speech, His Royal Highness emphasised the need to provide students at various levels of education and of different interests, inclinations, and potential to prepare them for alternative pathways to higher education and future careers, thus building a human capacity for industrial and economic development in the region.

Also present was the Brunei’s Minister of Education, Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Kerna Dato Seri Setia (Dr) Haji Awang Abu Bakar bin Haji Apong, who in his opening speech said, “Today we are faced with the diverse challenges of the rapidly changing world. Our tasks are not only confined to preparing future generations with building blocks of knowledge but most importantly identifying the learning skills required for the 21st century. This also means the need to look at our education system. In this respect, it will be exciting for us to consider, approve and endorse the strategic plans, which have been compiled by the SEAMEO Secretariat.

“The plans highlight future scenarios for SEAMEO to materialise our aspiration towards achieving Golden SEAMEO status by 2026. Chief among these is SEAMEO’s increased visibility and enhanced profile as an international organisation and strategic partner in Asean in the advancement of education, science and culture. The SEAMEO community will harmonise education standards and policies that enable it to thrive in response to economic, social, technological and legal challenges, yet remain mindful of the need to continue developing positive social and moral values, in a framework of mutual respect for each other’s rich culture and cultural identity.”

The minister further expressed his hopes that the conference will be able to chart the future direction of SEAMEO in the coming year as well as in the longer term. He also emphasised the vital role of Vocational and Technical Education in the development of skilled human resources.

The three-day conference is an annual meeting between 11 Ministers of Education from SEAMEO member countries Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam. It will update the ministers with the most recent information on the programmes and activities of the SEAMEO Secretariat and SEAMEO regional centres and networks.

The ministers will also endorse new programmes and initiatives, approve proposed budgets, and discuss issues and new challenges relevant to education in the region.

The first of the three plenary sessions of the conference held yesterday saw the election of Brunei Darussalam’s Minister of Education, Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Kerna Dato Seri Setia (Dr) Haji Awang Abu Bakar bin Haji Apong, as the SEAMEO Council President and Chairman of the 46th SEAMEO Council Conference and the 6th ASEAN Ministers of Education (ASEM) meeting.