Brunei can promote Seameo to the world

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ARMIN A Luistro, FSC, the Philippine Education Secretary and the former president of Seameo Council (Seamec), yesterday recommended that Brunei host an “international conference” in order for Seameo to have an “impact on the world”.

In an interview with The Brunei Times, Luistro, who handed over the presidency of the council to Bruneiian Education Minister Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Kerna Dato Seri Setia Hj Abu Bakar Hj Apong yesterday, said: “If there is one recommendation I would like to push for Pehin Dato Hj Abu Bakar as I am turning over the Seameo Council presidency, it is to conceptualise and organise this international conference where all 20 Seameo centres will be working together.”

“That should have an impact on the world and should be a way whereby Southeast Asia can be seen in a new light by other regions,” Luistro added on the sidelines of the opening of the 46th Seamec Conference at the Empire Hotel and Country Club.

He did not elaborate.

Luistro said he was “very elated and confident” that Brunei would be able to take on that initiative.

“It is about time for Seameo to have an impact on the world, so that Seameo can be the window whereby other regions in the world can understand Southeast Asia, communicate with Southeast Asia and be able to engage us,” Luistro explained.

The Philippine Education Secretary underscored that the conference was meant to formalise some of the earlier discussions two or three years ago, towards how education ministers could make Seameo the driving force for the coming together of Asean members.

“What we want is that the 20 Seameo centres will be able to come together and have more synergy in terms of projects, and activities that will have a greater impact on the region,” he said.

Meanwhile, he noted that as Brunei currently hosts Seameo Voctech, part of the mandate is to visit the centres in the region.

“I am hoping that part of Pehin’s legacy will be to work towards ensuring that these centres work in synergy.”

In a separate interview, Pehin Dato Hj Abu Bakar said he was pleased that education ministers endorsed the guidelines for the chairman on Wednesday, and added that Brunei was in a “firm position” to promote Seameo to the world.

“All this while, there have been no written guidelines as to the responsibility on how the chairman or president of Seamec operates, and we are very glad that the ministers endorsed this yesterday. One of the rules of the chairman is to project the image of Seameo to the region and the world,” he said.

Pehin Dato Hj Abu Bakar added, “Having been set up for almost 40 years, I think we are in a very firm position, and there are areas that we can promote. Already, there are associate member countries and international agencies who are keen to work with Seameo. So this is one area we can explore on how we can work more actively in promoting Seameo to other regions,” he said.

Speaking about his expectations on meetings to come, the education minister said he looked forward to yesterday’s meetings, where more programmes will be discussed, especially from centre directors.

“I think we need to focus on areas which are useful for discussions at an international level. I think the Secretariat will be able to come up with these issues and topics of mutual interest, not only to Seameo, but also to the international audience,” he said.

Seameo, or the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, was established in 1965 as a chartered international organisation whose purpose is to promote cooperation in education, science and culture in the Southeast Asian region. The member countries are: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.