Two-Year Term For President To See Out SEAMEO Targets

By Azlan Othman & Siti Hajar

Extending the duration of the president's post to another two years would give an opportunity for the president to review matters derived during the SEAMEO Council Conference, to make a visit to 20 SEAMEO Centres and to give views and way forward for the centre to meet the resolutions agreed upon at SEAMEO.

This was highlighted by the Minister of Education, Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Kerna Dato Seri Setia (Dr) Hj Awg Abu Bakar to the media yesterday at the press briefing at the completion of the 46th SEAMEC Council Conference.

"We have just completed a three-day 46th SEAMEO Council Conference on Friday where 29 resolutions have been made. During the meeting, Brunei introduced the round-table meeting, which gave the opportunity to the ministers to address their matters of concern and interests. The ministers gave encouraging feedback to the round-table meeting and agreed on many for resolutions where they agreed for the post of the president for SEAMEO which previously carried duration for only a year and which has now been extended to two years," he said.

"SEAMEO has been established for the past 46 years. The population of 600 million people or 10 per cent of the world population, is dynamic, diverse and rich in heritage.

"Education is important to this region. Youth as the working force in this region should be look upon with great interest especially in education, which if neglected would dampen the country's economic development.

"In SEAMEO, human capacity building is stressed alongside with establishing network and partnership and is engaged as an intellectual forum for policy-makers.

"For the past 46 years, the mission of SEAMEO has been implemented through the centres set up in eight ASEAN member countries. In the Sultanate, we have SEAMEO VOCTECH. It is hoped that all SEAMEO centres could foster its ties through the work of SEAMEO Secretariat."

On the benefits, the Sultanate gained through our participation in SEAMEO, Pehin Dato Hj Abu Bakar said "we host SEAMEO VOCTECH that emphasises on vocational and technical education through programmes on human resource development."

In the field of ICT, last year alone, the Ministry of Education acquired SEAMEO VOCTECH expertise to train some 700 teachers responsible in ICT. From other centres, we took part in programme run by RECSAM, a Research Centre for Science and Mathematics in Penang, Malaysia. We also acquired in-country programmes where regional experts come to Brunei to train the locals.

While, at the same time, the Sultanate also benefits through RELC or the Regional English Language Centre in Singapore and through INNOTECH or Innovation and Technology Centre in the Philippines. And recently, Malaysia play host to the centre for the special needs where Brunei also benefited.

On ways where Brunei cooperates with SEAMEO, Pehin Dato Hj Abu Bakar said it is conducted under the joint working groups with other ASEAN member countries. We also have bilateral relations.

It is the strategic plan of SEAMEO for golden SEAMEO when it achieves its 50 years anniversary to make it a centre of excellence and to see how SEAMEO could enhance its capacity and collaborate with international agencies. Currently we have close cooperation with UNESCO, the World Bank and so on. There is a need for SEAMEO Council Conference to see at a micro level on issues and if needed to assign or request research group to conduct a study for the ministers to get more detailed information such as on Education for All (EFA) like the status of SEAMEO with EFA.

During bilateral meetings with his regional counterparts, the minister also said he received queries from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) countries on how Brunei could assist in vocational and technical education.

What It Should Have Been

In our front page news item in the Weekend under the headline 'Exam results through SMS', the third paragraph should read, subscribers (students and parents) who wish to subscribe to this service are required to register online through the Ministry of Education's web portal at www.moe.edu.bn or www.machbrunei.com/moe/welcome.php. We regret the error.