Seven more get 3+0 programme licences

By Marina Tan

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Seven more private colleges have been granted licences to conduct foreign degree courses entirely in the country through the 3+0 programme.

The seven, which received their licences from Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today, are Taylor's College, Disted College (Penang), INTI College (Kuching), Sunway College, Kolej Damansara Utama, Rima College and the International College of Music.

They will be able to begin their 3+0 programmes from January, bringing to 17 the number of colleges allowed to offer foreign degree programmes completely within the country. The first batch received their licences in June.

The 3+0 programme is aimed at allowing more students to pursue higher education despite the economic downturn — students would save up to RM50,000 in fees alone — as well as to cope with higher demand due to better academic results.

Under the earlier 2+1 or 1+2 twinning programmes, students had to complete their final or last two years at the foreign partner university.

Programmes offered by this second batch of colleges include BA (Hons) in Accounting and Financial Management, BSc (Hons) in Computer Science, Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Software Engineering and Bachelor of Music (Hons) in Professional Music (music production and music technology).

The foreign partners are University of Sheffield, University of Bradford, University of Hertfordshire and University of Westminster (United Kingdom), as well as University of Technology Sydney, University of Wollongong, Deakin University, Victoria University of Technology and Murdoch University (Australia).

Najib said colleges which had applied as well as those keen to offer the 3+0 programmes should focus on courses which were in line with the Government's aspirations such as science and technology-based programmes, rather than those which offered short-term lucrative returns.

"If the courses are not strategic, we will not approve their applications as we do not want an oversupply of certain courses just because they require low expenditure," he said.

Najib reminded the colleges to adhere to the guidelines and standards set by the Ministry, adding that the five-year licence for the 3+0 programme might not be renewed or might even be withdrawn otherwise.

The Ministry, he said, took measures to ensure that the degrees issued under the 3+0 programme were of equal quality to those issued by the foreign partners' campuses overseas.

These include periodic quality audits by the National Accreditation Board and, beginning March, by the UK-based Quality Assurance Agency.

Another measure is to require an annual academic report from local colleges and their foreign partners for each 3+0 programme, with details about students' academic progress, staff development, academic staff exchanges and student exchanges.