Workshop discusses challenges in entrepreneurship education

Our Correspondent
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A two-day workshop on ‘Entrepreneurship Education and SME Development’ began on Sunday at the Caledonian College of Engineering (CCE) under the patronage of H E Eng Ali bin Masoud bin Ali al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry.

CCE is organising the workshop in partnership with Universiti Teknologi MARA’s (UiTM) Malaysian Academy of SME and Entrepreneurship Development (MASMED). It aims to discuss and share experiences on entrepreneurship education and the challenges in promoting entrepreneurial education in the higher education sector.

Policies and legislations that are conducive for entrepreneurship development will also be discussed, along with adequacy to promote SMEs and the system for its development.

Focussing on the challenges, Professor Dr Razmi bin Chik, representing MASMED, UiTM, said that the discovery of oil wealth in Oman and the subsequent generous subsidies to citizens has kept a big portion of the population from trying to become a category of entrepreneurs called necessity entrepreneurs. Similarly, he said, “In Malaysian context, the highest concentration of highly qualified Malays is in the government sector, and it is an uphill battle to get qualified Malays to be involved in high-end entrepreneurship.”

He also spoke about setbacks for Malaysian and Omani universities. “The challenge is to prepare our universities to be entrepreneurial and to deliver effective education for all citizens. Ultimately, not in the distant future, few of our universities will be as good as the many leading entrepreneurial universities in western countries,” he said.

The need for SME-focussed education was reiterated by Dr Abdullah al Zakwani, executive director of Oman’s Industrial Innovation Center, who addressed some of the challenges that SMEs face here. He said that entrepreneurial value systems need to be instilled in young minds as part of formal education, and entrepreneurship needs to be projected as a promising career option and not as a last resort for the unemployed.

P Mohammed Ali, chairman, board of directors, CCE, said, “Entrepreneurship is rewarding as well as challenging. One should be ready to take calculated risk and should always have a plan to mitigate any possible failure.”