

NORTHEASTERN TOUR

PM backs health, education hub plan

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MAHA SARAKHAM: Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra yesterday backed a proposal to turn Maha Sarakham province into an education and healthcare hub.

She was speaking while paying a visit to the province on the third leg of an upcountry tour yesterday.

After a briefing by Mahasarakham University, the premier said she wanted the university to work with the Public Health and Science and Technology ministries to implement the plan.

University president Supachai Samppito said the university aimed to be a centre of education especially in the field of public health and medicine, which would help Maha Sarakham attain its goal of being a hub for education and medical care.

The university could serve students from other countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, particularly once the region is better linked with a high-speed rail system, Assist Prof Supachai said.

The university's faculty of medicine planned to construct a 635-million-baht hospital with an initial 200 in-patient beds, he said.

The hospital later could be expanded so it has 800-1,000 inpatient beds. The cost would come to about 2.4 billion baht.

Rajabhat Mahasarakham University rector Somchai Wongkasem conceded the university would like to hire more staff, but lacks the money.

Ms Yingluck also wanted Maha Sarakham to come up with a strategic plan to produce graduates for its agricultural industry, which is a key source of income in the province.

Organic products are doing well, which raised the prospect that education institutions in Maha Sarakham could help improve the quality control of organic agricultural products, she said.

The premier has also visited Buri Ram during her trip to the Northeast.

The first leg of the upcountry trip took her to Mukdahan, followed by Nakhon Nayok and Prachin Buri.



Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra greets Mahasarakham University students who are wearing the traditional dress of 10 Asean countries to welcome her during her visit to the northeastern province. PATTARAPONG CHATPATTARASIL