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## Foreign pupils told to pay up or lose their eligibility

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Foreign pupils may lose their places in Government schools if they fail to pay their annual school fees, Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said today.

He said although the Government was under an international obligation to allow these pupils to study at Government schools, it would be left with no choice considering the fees due had ran into millions of ringgit.

"We are aware of this problem as it is particularly rampant in Sabah and I have asked the schools concerned to look into this and try to collect the fees as soon as possible," he said after officiating the 25th anniversary celebrations of Universiti Putra Malaysia's Educational Studies Faculty.

Also present was UPM vice-chancellor Professor Tan Sri Dr Syed Jalaludin Syed Salim.

Musa was commenting on media reports today that most of the 55,000 foreign pupils in Government schools nationwide had failed to pay their annual school fees.

The pupils, mostly Bangladeshis and Indonesians, have to pay RM120 and RM240 a year to study in primary and secondary schools.

"These pupils are only exempted from paying school fees in exceptional cases, like if they could not afford it and other special cases," he said, adding that most of them were children of immigrants.

On the disciplinary problem among school students, he said UPM would be carrying out a detailed study soon and then propose recommendations on ways best to overcome the problem.

"We will look into these recommendations and if necessary make the changes to improve the disciplinary level among students," he said.

He also urged students wishing to further their studies to be more cautious when choosing their fields of study and to speak to as many student councillors before making their decision.

He said there was sufficient information available from both universities and private colleges in the country and students should take time to make full use of these.

Musa was responding to a statement from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday who said that joblessness among graduates occurred alongside job vacancies because there was a mismatch between courses chosen and skill sought.

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