

Keep politics out of proposed varsity

STAR 4 5 JUL 2001



THERE is one characteristic that makes Tunku Abdul Rahman College stand out among some of our local colleges and even universities — its graduates are much sought after by employers.

The students at the Setapak main campus and its branch campuses in Penang, Perak, Pahang and Johor Baru take their studies seriously.

They, as well as the lecturers, are committed towards academic excellence as everyone of them realises the importance of obtaining good results.

Neither do TAR college students hold demonstrations, carry out smear campaigns or circulate poison-pen literature.

Although the college is owned by the MCA, there is no place for politics within the campus:

The students are aware their priority is to study, get their diplomas or degrees, and gain employment.

They can join any political party, if they are keen, after getting their scrolls.

After three decades, with TAR college's proven track record of producing over 60,000 graduates, it is a natural progression for the MCA to set up a university.

Though there are already 14 public universities, six private universities and three foreign branch campuses in the country, the setting up of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman would help ease the continuing demand for places in local institutions of higher learning.

Each year, we read of bright young Malaysians who are unable to enter local universities because of limited space.

The quota system has further added pressure on our universities and the Education Ministry in coping with the demands for places in faculties such as medicine, dentistry, engineering and computer science.

With the setting up of Utar, it is hoped Malaysia will not lose these talents overseas.

Malaysia needs the contribution of intelligent Malaysians and every effort must be made to stop this brain drain.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad must be commended for his openness in approving the setting up of Utar.

It is thus most regrettable that critics, particularly PAS and Parti Rakyat Malaysia, are finding fault with Utar.

It is the height of hypocrisy for PAS to object to the setting up of Utar on the grounds that it is initiated by MCA.

PAS is a known sponsor of kindergartens, religious schools and colleges, where its politics are propagated to the students.

In universities, PAS leaders continue the

indoctrination of students with its brand of extremism.

PRM also has a steady following among non-Malay students and it is well-known that some university lecturers openly advocate the party's politics in campus.

There are other critics who have attacked Utar on the grounds that it is initiated by the MCA, and nothing else. Flimsy arguments are put up to hide their political prejudices.

Then there are also MCA members themselves, because of their quarrel with party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, who are prepared to run down Utar for political expediency.

And there is the journalist who wrote in an Internet news website that the MCA "thinks it does the community proud. It does not."

The DAP, at least, feels the pulse of the Chinese community better now after its defeat in the 1999 general election.

Misreading the mood of the community, the party partnered PAS in the fight against the Barisan Nasional and paid a heavy political price. This time, it has openly come out to support Utar even as PAS and PRM have stated their objections.

Grassroots members of Chinese-based political parties, including the DAP, are aware the community has given its endorsement to the university.

The MCA leaders must now explain that, unlike many private colleges, including TAR, Utar would be able to grant university degrees.

It also has the potential of becoming an internationally renowned university in the region if

it has a good academic staff and the right person to head it, in line with the Government effort to make Malaysia an education centre of excellence.

The community should not be unduly concerned about talk that colleges such as the private New Era College would be affected if fund-raising campaigns are carried out for Utar.

Utar should not be seen as a competitor but as a complement in the field of education. Even if it was not mooted by MCA, other private universities would be setup.

At present only Universiti Malaya offers courses in Chinese Studies, but with the setting up of Utar, a similar faculty can be set up too.

As a full-fledged private university, Utar will also be able to attract many foreign students.

Malaysians, especially the Chinese community, has high expectations of Utar and they want the university to take off.

Malaysian leaders, particularly those claiming to represent the Chinese community, should provide ideas on how Utar can become a reality instead of finding fault with the proposal.

MCA leaders will come and go but Utar will remain as a hallmark of the community's uncompromising pursuit of education.

Malaysians will certainly benefit from the programmes offered by Utar when it is fully realised.

For the sake of our children, can we just keep politics out of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman?