

No speakers' corner for now

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USM students not ready for it, says vice-chancellor

By Agnes James

PENANG, Tues: Universiti Sains Malaysia is considering setting up a speakers' corner. But it will not be until its students reach a level where intelligent and academic discourses can be held.

Its vice-chancellor, Datuk Prof Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, said yesterday such discourses would not be fruitful "at the current

stage of development among its student community".

"Setting up a speakers' corner has its pros and cons. Currently, there is a vacuum of intelligent debate," he said after the launch of a two-day Ecological Modelling workshop, Ecomod 2001.

"Having them exposed to debate now will be counter-productive and will not serve its purpose."

Dzulkifli said steps have been taken to help

USM build a student community that is more mature.

They include occasional public forums with national key figures and open discussions with university leaders.

"This fits the situation now and steps are being taken to help the students in intelligent academic discourse," he said.

Asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's reminder to univer-

sity staff not to use students to undermine the government, Dzulkifli said there have been no such complaints against USM staff or students.

He said the universities already have a mechanism in place that is mainly based on feedback which is thoroughly investigated.

"Our lecturers are aware of their responsibility in carrying out their duties. There is no reason to be concerned," he said.