

31/01/2001

UM science centre intake in March

Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Universiti Malaya's Pusat Asasi Sains (Science Foundation Centre) matriculation centre will begin accepting students in March after a change of mind by authorities over its scheduled closure in April.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said today that the centre would retain its former structure for the coming academic session.

"I have met the university and it has been decided that the centre would maintain its old structure," he said after opening a four-day international conference on organisational development and leadership in education at the Legend Hotel.

The decision to close the centre had caused an outcry as the move was seen as depriving Bumiputera students of an opportunity to enhance their knowledge in science at pre-university level.

The university's rationale for closing the centre was because matriculation programmes had been taken over by the Education Ministry to allow universities to concentrate on their core activity, which is conducting degree courses.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had, however, advised that the centre be allowed to continue.

Musa said the Government decided to retain the centre as it would give students an opportunity to experience "life on campus" before they embarked on their degree courses.

Asked whether the centre would use its previous curriculum or the ministry's standardised curriculum, Musa said it still needed to be discussed.

He added that the ministry had received suggestions from the university on how the centre would be utilised, including allowing the facilities and teaching staff to remain as they were.

In his speech, Musa said a progressive curriculum must have five important features.

He said they were the learning of civilisation and civility; meaningful understanding; science and technology, work skills; and ecological and societal crises.

"Our schools and universities are also not built to serve the sole purpose of industrialisation and capitalism.

"We are not the machines of economy. Rather, we are human beings with different cultures, customs, histories and traditions."

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