

**Kit Siang: Stop wasting millions on Geneva event**  
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The Higher Education Ministry should end the participation of public universities at the annual Geneva International Exhibition to slash government expenditure.

The next Geneva International Exhibition, set to be held from April 18 to 22, is described by Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang as distracting universities from pursuing academic excellence.

He said Higher Education Minister Mustapha Mohamad should slash drastically participation of Malaysian public universities in order to end the obsession with commercial baubles which completely distracts from the search for international academic and research excellence.

On Monday, Dr Wee Ka Siong (BN - Ayer Hitam) raised the issue in Parliament and questioned the credibility of the exhibition, saying that the awards "offer little academic merit."

In 2005, 11 local public universities sent exhibits, winning 46 gold, 41 silver and 23 bronze medals. The exhibition is not widely regarded as an actual competition, as the jury awards medals based on merit. Each category can have more than a single gold medal winner.

"I had in the past criticised public universities, particularly University of Malaya and Universiti Sains Malaysia, for their distorted sense of priorities in surrendering their prestigious slots in international best-university rankings and finding comfort instead in easy-to-get gold, silver and bronze medals..." said Lim in a statement today.

### **A 'meeting place'**

He said although Wee had raised the matter in Parliament, he said DAP's economic advisor Tony Pua had first highlighted the issue on his blog.

"My question is, are trade fairs the best places to 'judge' the quality of a university or an academic's research, publication of inventions?" said Pua on his blog.

"With all due respect to 'trade fairs', the objectives of such fairs are typically not to judge the quality of one's works but to actually create a 'meeting place' between 'inventors' and the potential buyers or investors," he added.

Lim pointed out that the world's best universities are not required to participate in the exhibition.

"Why are Malaysian public universities splashing millions of ringgit every year for these commercial baubles when the money should be better pent in the pursuit of academic and research quality and excellence?" asked Lim.

Lim said Mustapha "should come to Parliament to announce a drastic slashing" on such international participation as they "do nothing to get the Malaysian public universities restored into the world's top and best 100 or 200 universities."

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