

Ministry okays 33 TARC courses
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Bede Hong

After a 38-year wait, the government has given its green light for some 33 courses offered by the MCA-run Tunku Abdul Rahman College.

However for these courses to be recognised, they still need to be approved by the Public Service Department.

Deputy Higher Education Minister and MCA vice president Ong Tee Keat announced this today and immediately rejected claims that the approval was a sweetener for the Machap by-election.

"The college approached the ministry in the fourth quarter of last year. There was then no such issue of the by-election," he told a press conference at the Parliament lobby.

The non-recognition of the TARC courses was one of several national issues raised by opposition party DAP in their campaigns for the by-election. The polling on Thursday sees a straight fight between DAP and BN's MCA candidate.

Ong said that the approval was granted by the Committee of Higher Education (JKPT) from the Ministry of Higher Education.

The courses that would be recognised now include diplomas and advanced diplomas for accounting, science, engineering and business studies.

Waiting for PSD approval

Most of these courses have been taught at the college since 1972.

"Over the years we know that TARC graduates have been absorbed into the private sector. The move to seek approval is mainly prompted by necessity to cater to a wider scope of prospective careers for students who want to join the civil service," he said.

TARC was founded by the MCA in 1969. Although it is currently categorised as a public higher learning institution (IPTA), its courses are not recognised by the government.

Recently former TARC student Soo Pak Leong had complained that he was unable to get a job with the police force as his degree was not recognised by the Public Service Department.

The DAP had then highlighted the issue by asking how come a degree from the MCA-run college was not recognised by the government.

Ong said that now that the ministry has approved the courses, it was just a formality for the PSD to give its recognition.

DAP 'stole our thunder'

Ong also expressed regret that DAP was exploiting the recognition issue.

"TARC is an issue that the Opposition (DAP) wants to exploit. They are eager to raise the matter through the Machap by-election," Ong told reporters.

"I am strongly regretful of DAP's gimmicks and baseless allegations. They can steal our thunder but we proceed in accordance to our pace and procedures," he said.

Lim also brushed aside allegations by DAP that his ministry does not answer inquiries by e-mail.

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