

Political intervention in varsity intakes

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Politicians are interfering in the university intake process by recommending seats for certain students, revealed Deputy Higher Education Minister Ong Tee Keat today.

Speaking at a press conference at the Parliament lobby, he said students who do not get places, the university or course of their choice, are turning to politicians for help.

"Although it is a norm for us to receive phone calls from politicians recommending students, this is very inappropriate," he stressed, adding that the ministry is strict about the meritocracy system.

"I'm not saying that politicians cannot help the students who approach them. They can assist in other ways by giving advice and opinions," he said.

However, he said students who obtain "surat sokongan" (recommendation letters) from politicians can attach them to their appeal letter.

Ong also urged students who failed to obtain a place in public higher learning institutions (IPTAs) to appeal before June 29.

"They may do so by writing a letter to the ministry or via e-rayuan through the ministry's website.

"Students who failed to get the course and university of their choice may also appeal but they have to send a letter directly to the particular IPTA that they wish to enroll in," he said.

Ong also refuted allegations that the ministry does not entertain appeals from these students.

"We respond to both written appeals and appeals via e-rayuan," he said, adding that appeals must be made by the students and not by their representatives.

UM relocation issue

In another development, Ong clarified that property developer GuocoLand Bhd had never approached the ministry to discuss the relocation of Universiti Malaya (UM).

"A senior officer from GuocoLand Bhd came to see me on Monday and he assured me that his company did not make any offer to relocate UM to Sepang," he said.

"He also told me that GuocoLand has never made such an offer even in the past," added the deputy minister.

Ong was in the dark as to how and why the rumour started.

"I don't think UM is spreading the rumour," he said, adding that the issue became the talk of town following the wide media coverage.

"I'm not pointing fingers at the media, but the media must be responsible with what they report," he stressed.

Ong also said that GuocoLand Bhd had issued statements regarding this in the past and therefore it is unfair to claim that the developer had never denied the rumour.

It was previously rumoured that GuocoLand Bhd, owned by millionaire banker Quek Leng Chan, had proposed that the campus to be turned into a commercial and residential township to complement its Damansara City project.

Business Times had reported that if the proposal is approved, the university will be relocated to Sepang.

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