

Scholarship Fiasco: Federal Government Can't Even Get Their Act Together
Malaysianmirror.com
May 21, 2011

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin ordered for a probe by the Public Service Department(PSD) to investigate complaints that some SPM top scorers were not offered scholarships is in line with DAP's call yesterday for a full investigation and stern action against errant government officials. Tan Sri Muhyiddin had said that the problem does not lie with the Education Ministry as we have already forwarded our list of scholarship candidates.

If that is the case then a probe by PSD is necessary to determine what went wrong and why there is a perennial annual problem of top students failing to receive JPA scholarships despite scoring straights A+s, while students who scored much lower were given scholarships to study overseas. Malaysians are puzzled as to how this blunder by fumbling officials can even occur. In this day and age, with computerised databases and the amount of technology available, how can such a straightforward process of awarding scholarships to top students end up so botched?

Malaysian students who have worked diligently in order to achieve their dreams now face the prospect of having their dreams crushed by a bureaucracy that is inept and unappreciative. What about the parents who have to explain to their children that despite doing their best and being the best, they have been denied their due opportunities because of a silly bureaucratic mistake that they now have to appeal for?

How can the Federal Government make those students appeal for something that they well and truly deserved? To do so is akin to punishing them for a fault that is not theirs! This is nothing short of preposterous, and the Federal Government had better get their act together or risk losing more Malaysian talent to other countries who must be laughing their heads off at our sheer incompetence.

According to the Malaysia Information Technology Report for Q2 2011, Government spending in IT infrastructure and services was estimated to be around RM2 billion in 2010 alone. Every year, billions of ringgit are spent on upgrading and maintaining Government IT systems, yet errors of this magnitude can still occur.

In any case, such an error can easily be corrected, as it is a matter of automatically awarding scholarships to every student with the prerequisite results. This is a simple process, a 'no-brainer', given the advanced technology available in Government systems. Isn't spending billions of ringgit on computerisation a waste of public funds when the Federal Government can not even correct this simple but silly mistake of not granting top scholarships to top students?

If such a simple database exercise cannot be handled properly, it is no surprise that Malaysians have unanimously rejected the 1Malaysia email proposal. DAP urges the Federal government to award deserving students with scholarships immediately without any questions asked.

Lim Guan Eng is the Secretary-General of DAP, Chief Minister for Penang and MP for Bagan

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