

Hishammuddin hits out at Ong

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EDUCATION Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein has hit out at his former deputy, Datuk Ong Tee Keat, for making inaccurate statements on Chinese schools in Johor recently.

He said he was hurt with "the words, way and venue" used by Ong, who is now Deputy Higher Education Minister, to voice his allegations.

"As a high-ranking official in MCA and the Barisan Nasional government, his statement is irresponsible," Hishammuddin said in the Parliament lobby yesterday.

Last Saturday, Ong was quoted in two Chinese newspapers as saying that certain government officers had misappropriated funds meant for refurbishment of a few Chinese schools in Johor.

At a dinner with teachers and board members of a Chinese school in Muar, Ong named two schools, SJKC Kung Yu and SJKC Ai Hwa, which had their refurbishment allocation misused by the officers.

Hishammuddin said he had investigated Ong's claims and found them to be baseless.

"SJKC Ai Hwa had only minor problems with its refurbishment works, whereas SJKC Kung Yu's problem stems from cost evaluation works with the contractor hired by the Public Works Department," he said, adding that these problems had nothing to do with corruption of government officers.

He said a special refurbishment allocation of RM10 million was approved by the ministry in October last year to



Hishammuddin says he is saddened by Ong's accusations

help repair schools nationwide. The biggest recipients were Chinese vernacular schools, numbering 114, followed by Tamil schools (71) and missionary schools (25).

He was saddened that Ong would make such accusations without taking into consideration the spirit of friendship and teamwork.

Meanwhile, Ong, when met yesterday, said he was sorry that Hishammuddin took offence at his advice given to the chairman of a school board of directors in Bukit Kepong in Johor last week.

"I had advised the chairman to report such cases as allowing public funds to be wasted is tantamount to malpractice and corruption."

On whether the claim was true, Ong said: "I must say that we know better than him (Hishammuddin)."

He said that for people like them holding public office, "it is good when we are mindful of our words and choose not to attack others verbally and without grounds".

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