

Criticism – a matter of politics and Govt

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KUALA LUMPUR: The decision to reprimand Deputy Higher Education Datuk Ong Tee Keat for his statement directed at the Education Ministry was made based on government principle.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the decision was made at the Cabinet level in the presence of all Barisan Nasional component party heads.

"When it comes to the Government, the principle is very clear that you can't transcend another ministry's responsibility," he told reporters after launching and presenting the DRB-Hicom-Deftech special scholarship fund at the Defence

Ministry here yesterday.

He was asked to comment on some Barisan leaders questioning the Cabinet's move to reprimand Ong for alleging misuse of funds meant for Chinese schools' refurbishment, when Umno Youth leaders were allowed to hurl criticism at Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon alleging him to have neglected issues concerning the Malays in the state.

"That's all, that's enough. It is a matter of principle. One is politics; the other is the Government," he said when pressed further by reporters.

The reprimand was issued

through Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed on Wednesday.

Mustapa, in his apology to the Education Ministry over Ong's remarks, said the Cabinet decided that it was not appropriate for a government officer to openly criticise fellow officers in other ministries.

The apology came after Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein brought up the matter to the Cabinet.

On another matter, Najib said that Malaysian soldiers have been trained to be part of the peacekeeping force to be deployed to Lebanon.

However, Najib, who is also Defence Minister, said Malaysia had yet to receive the green light from the United Nations.

"We have not heard anything but we've done the training."

On former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's remarks questioning the need to send the peacekeeping force to Lebanon when the intention of the UN was to protect Israel from being attacked by Hezbollah rather the civilians in Lebanon, Najib said: "We will implement the mandate by the UN to ensure a ceasefire in that area and to stabilise Lebanon. That's all."