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New academic programmes to expand higher education options

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Higher Education Ministry (MoHE) is open to applications for new academic programmes at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), polytechnics and community colleges in Sabah to broaden study options at public higher education institutions (IPTA) in the state.

Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambray Abdul Kadir (*pic*) said each application would be assessed based on key criteria, including institutional expertise, industry needs, delivery capacity, student demand and graduate employability, while avoiding duplication of programmes among IPTAs.

"This approach ensures the programmes offered are of quality, relevant and aligned with Sabah's economic development needs, while optimising existing expertise

and resources," he said during the Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Zambray said MoHE is committed to expanding higher education opportunities in Sabah to ensure local students had wider access to quality programmes without having to depend solely on institutions in Peninsular Malaysia.

"Until June 30, a total of 16 IPTAs, including branch campuses, were operating in Sabah, offering various programmes. These comprise four public universities, three polytechnics and nine community colleges," he said.

He said UMS and its branch campuses were developing programmes based on research strengths, Borneo's unique geography and biodiversity, including marine science and aquaculture, tropical

biotechnology, medical sciences, heritage and social sciences, as well as ecotourism and business.

At Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sabah Branch, programme offerings focus on tourism and hospitality, business, administrative sciences, science and technology. Zambray said MoHE was also implementing 21 development projects in Sabah costing RM1.05 billion to support higher education capacity, with RM160.6 million allocated under the First Rolling Plan of the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP) for 2026.

He said the ministry did not set specific quotas for higher education placements as student admission depended on the courses offered by universities and demand.

"We cannot simply set a target, such as 80 per cent of programmes being offered in

Sabah, as some courses are also available elsewhere, particularly in Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak.

"However, we continue to plan for better access through a niche-based approach, such as law programmes, as Sabah and Sarawak have a strong need for these fields," he said.

Responding to a supplementary question from Dr Halimah Ali (PN-Kapar), Zambray said the government provides funding through MoHE and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation to support university research activities.

He said many research projects had produced positive outcomes, including those under RDICE (Research, Development, Innovation, Commercialisation and Economy Programme), which focuses on research with commercial value. – BERNAMA





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SUMMARIES

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