

# No bar on undergrads voicing out views: UMS

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Harun

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) neither stopped nor prevented its undergraduates voicing out their views or wishes. Its Vice Chancellor Prof

Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said this in refuting a claim by one of the university's officers that about 100 undergraduates have been expelled for being too vocal.

"The university is always open to any complaint or problem raised by the students. We also encourage the students to debate through a public forum as it is beneficial in improving their soft skills," he said.

Claiming that the remark was baseless and had a sabotage element, Harun said any issue or problem involving students would be tried through the university's legal and disciplinary unit and that it would not simply get rid of students.

"I regret the statement from the said officer who I believe has his own agenda. The allegation is very irrelevant and I feel ashamed if the officer concerned who did not want his identity revealed is a staff of UMS," he said. Harun did not deny there were students who committed offences and were referred to the unit and penalised after a hearing. "The penalty will be in the form of suspension of semes-

ter or suspension from the student hostel, but not sacking from university.

The sentencing would be in accordance to the university's rules and regulations, after the students were found guilty of the offence."

However, they have the opportunity to appeal, adding the punishment is part of the university's effort so they would repent. He said he would investigate to find out the identity of the person behind the allegation, describing him as a traitor who wants to smear the good name of the university.

It was said that the university had faced students who had been indulging too much time on activism in view of the recently amended Universities and University Colleges Act (Auku) 1971 which allows them to indulge in politics.

The source had said there have been instances where students were hauled up by the authorities for taking part in demonstrations.

"Auku allows students to take part in peaceful demonstrations. However this has to be done outside the campus," he said. "But compared to the thousands of students enrolled at the university, only a small number were involved. Around 100," the source said.

Several incidents have happened in and outside the university grounds, with one occurring some years ago at the Labuan campus, and also instances of them going against certain government policies.

One of these incidents had to do with students being unhappy that the university had decided to move their hostel to

another block, while another over their resentment to the forthcoming Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The involvement of students in social causes in Sabah has grown over the years, however the official denied that Sabahans were quick to take part in radical social causes.

"Many of these ideals are not from local origins. Many of our boys and girls are not easily influenced by this," the source said. He said many social causes were imported here by students from the peninsula, adding that they are those who are still loyal or follow their political figures from West Malaysia.

On Sept 8, the Youth and Sports Ministry set out plans to engage more youths involved in anti-government sentiments and activism prone to hold street protests.

Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Tawfiq Titingan claimed a number of them had been taking part in social causes as they may be confused by certain individuals who are trying to use them for personal agendas.

To date, he said the Ministry has not found any records or reports against local groups involved in such activity, but believed they may be part of certain activist groups not registered under the ministry. "They might be registered under some other organisation ... those under us are registered with the Registrar of Youths.

"So far no federal or state agencies made any report against any local associations registered under my ministry," he said, here.