

# Warning on declining standards of varsities

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**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysia would suffer a brain drain if the government does not arrest the declining standards of local universities.

Centre For A Better Tomorrow (Cenbet) Executive Council Member Woon King Chai said, based on a study released by Anderson Market Analytic, Malaysian students prefer to study abroad with a view of obtaining a permanent resident status upon graduation.

"To catch up, the government needs to uphold academic freedom, and do away with any form of political interference in campuses," Woon said in a statement.

He said the prosecution of Universiti Malaya (UM) academic Dr Azmi Sharom and investigation of Dr Khoo Ying Hui under the Sedition Act, as well as the removal of Prof Datuk Dr Mohammad Redzuan Othman from UM Centre for Democracy and Elections (UMcedel) have lent credence to the perception that political interference is rife in universities.

"It is also imperative that any

promotion exercise among academics be based on merit. Right now, the process appears to be opaque at best. This has resulted in many good lecturers leaving in search of greener pasture and universities deprived of quality academic staff will naturally drive students away," he said.

Woon said that local universities' performance at the global level have not been at their best.

In the Times Higher Education World University Ranking for 2015-2016, Malaysia's best performing university is Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, which is in the 401-500 band.

While Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Mara are in the 601-800 band.

"It is not surprising that universities of such rankings do not appeal very much to our students.

"The government needs to quickly stem this tide. Granting more autonomy to universities would help restore the faith of more Malaysians to study in local ivory towers," Woon said.