POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

MASZLEE: VARSITIES WON'T BE ABUSED

We want universities to enjoy autonomy, cultivate academic freedom, says education minister

Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik at a press conference at his ministry in Putrajaya yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

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EDUCATION Minister Dr Maszlee Malik has given his assurance that universities would not be abused by anyone, including himself, for political mileage.

"This is a new era. I will make sure that the Pakatan Harapan government will never misuse universities for political interests. This includes me," he said.

"We will neither control universities nor force them (to do anything). We want universities to enjoy autonomy and cultivate academic freedom in their territory."

Maszlee reiterated his stand that he wanted to turn universities into an open intellectual arena, allowing them to conduct forums and hold discourses, similar to universities in the United Kingdom.

On Universiti Malaya's (UM) achievement in securing a Top 100 position in the World University Rankings, Maszlee said UM had been showing consistent performance, with seven of its subjects ranked in the Top 50 QR Ranking by Subject 2018, early this year.

The oldest university in Malaysia is now ranked 87th in the world, from 114th last year.

Maszlee said UM's success had proven that universities in Malaysia had strong reputation at the international level and his ministry would continue supporting and helping local researchers to secure cooperation with international researchers.

"We want universities in Malaysia to not only be known for their rankings, but through citations and academic publication in various fields."

It was reported that the 15th edition of the QS World University Rankings, released by global higher education analysts QS Quacquarelli Symonds, saw Malaysian universities rise in the ranks, except one which remained in the same spot.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (184th) joins the world's Top 200, an achievement narrowly missed out on by Universiti Putra Malaysia (202th).

Two other universities which rose in the ranks were Universiti Sains Malaysia which made it to 207th position from 264th, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, which jumped to 228th from 253rd. **Additional reporting by Meor Ahmad Nasriin Rizal**