

## Saifuddin: Red tape cause of communication gulf

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Universities have been told to improve their administration to better attend to the needs of students.

Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said yesterday the communication gulf between students and administrators was a long-standing matter which was due to excessive bureaucracy.

"The ministry has received and attended to a lot of these complaints, but the problem is still there and needs constant monitoring.

"Much of the time, it's due to students having to navigate the university bureaucracy, such as having too many forms to fill or to submit official requests to organise small forums or events. This can lead to a lot of time-wasting and distracts students from their studies."

On Saturday, 60 student leaders had a dialogue with the MCA leadership. The students said there was a general lack of communication with university administrations. MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek said the MCA would submit a memorandum on it to the ministry.

To this, Saifuddin said: "We will be more than happy to receive the memorandum as it is in the best interests of the students that we listen to them and attend to their needs."

He said that while many students were now approaching the universities' top management for help through more directly, more could be done to improve efficiency at the administrative level.

"I think it's important to note that university officers are measured by work completed by the year, while students live their lives by the semester. Students just want their problems solved more quickly."

Senior university administrators say they have told students to approach them directly on any matter.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin said she spoke with students everyday on multiple issues.

"They contact me via my mobile phone, where they can call, text or email me directly, or they get in touch through my Twitter and Facebook accounts."

Similarly, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Sahol Hamid said he responded daily to students' requests and concerns through his Facebook page, which had more than 27,000 subscribers.

"My deputies and I are committed to attending to the students directly. It has worked very well for UiTM -- we are very big but very close."

Universiti Putra Malaysia vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Radin Umar said the university had an open door policy.