

Become an all-rounder

By LOH FOON FONG

LACK of participation in co-curriculum activities is a reason why straight A students fail to get the courses they want in public universities, said Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Ong Tee Keat.

“These students might excel in academics but their involvement in outside activities which makes up 10% of the requirement to enter public universities is poor.

“This reduced their chances of getting the courses they wanted, for which places are also limited. But many still get their second or third choice,” he said.

Ong was asked why some students who could not get the courses they wanted locally, were offered scholarships by overseas bodies, including for critical courses.

When asked what the Ministry had been doing to retain such students, he said the number offered scholarships overseas was limited.

“Nevertheless, there has been some improvement in the last two years,” he told reporters after launching the Ministry’s Education Programme with the Rakyat 2008 exhibition on Sunday.

For example, many critical courses are now offered by private higher education institutions, he said.

“We have also increased the loan amount for courses like medicine, pharmacy, dentistry and the health sciences.”

“The number of complaints by those not getting the courses they want has also reduced,” he said.

This is based not only on statistics but feedback from other bodies, especially political parties, said Ong adding that there had been increased awareness on the entry requirements among candidates.

Higher Education Management Department director-general Prof Datuk Dr Hassan Said said candidates who fail to get the course they applied for can appeal directly to the university concerned.

“Those who do not receive any offer at all can appeal online,” he said.