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A lesson to remember



Something to remember: Khaled presenting a souvenir to Mustapa (centre) at a farewell gathering as ministry secretary-general Datuk Zulkefli A Hassan, Mustapa's wife, Datin Kharmazan Ahmed Meah and Khaled's wife, Datin Seri Rosni Omar (right) look on.

Tokpa: Ethnic relations module issue shows how complicated things can get

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KUALA LUMPUR: The ethnic relations module for universities issue is one that Datuk Mustapa Mohamed will always remember.

For the former Higher Education Minister, the issue showed how complicated things could get in the ministry.

"I learnt my lesson from the ethnic relations module issue. When it was first released, I defended it in Parliament only to have it withdrawn by the Cabinet the next day," he said.

The module, aimed at encouraging open discussion of racial matters among students, was introduced in 2006 as a compulsory subject for first-year public university students.

However, the content in a guidebook used in Universiti Putra Malaysia was found questionable and drew flak from various groups.

"We then went through seven drafts as the Cabinet rejected the module three times and I went through it line by line to ensure all sensitivities had been addressed," Mustapa said at a

farewell gathering held for him on Monday night.

Mustapa, who is now Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister, thanked those present for working with him, particularly in developing the National Higher Education Strategic Plan.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, who hosted the gathering, pledged to carry on the work started by Mustapa.

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities president Dr Parmjit Singh said the progress made by Mustapa in the last two years was unprecedented.

More than 700 Higher Education Ministry staff, vice-chancellors of public universities and their deputies, and private education institutions heads attended the function.

Also present were Transport Minister Datuk Ong Tee Keat, who was formerly Mustapa's deputy, and Deputy Higher Education Ministers Datuk Idris Haron and Dr Hou Kok Chung.