

from students who have been overcharged by agents and adds it will stop dealing with the unscrupulous ones.

"If the Chinese Government bans the operation of agents, the college may consider setting up recruiting offices in major cities in the mainland," he adds.

Inti College president Tan Yew Sing, who has been actively running a branch campus of sorts in Beijing, China, is concerned that Malaysia's reputation as a provider of quality education is not blemished by what's going on.

He says that colleges should not compromise in any way in the pursuit of high enrolment numbers, and should sever ties with recruiting agents found to be unscrupulous. Inti has a significant number of Chinese students both at its Subang Jaya and Nilai campuses.

To counter the problem of unscrupulous agents, Sedaya College has set up a recruitment office in China staffed by an experienced counsellor, its CEO Peter Ng says.

"In the early stages, we had some middlemen who charged students additional fees for referring them to our college without our knowledge. That created a lot of problems for us.

"When the students later found out about the false promises (made by the agents), they became frustrated and complained to us. That is when the truth emerged. Some were even promised that going to foreign partner university was a guaranteed thing.

"Now that we are fully aware of how agents operate, we are very careful about it and require students to arrange their own visas before leaving China," Ng says.

Another condition is that students must maintain their full-time student status and are not allowed to work at any time.

"When we go to China, we tell them the same thing, that is, if they do not have enough money for their first year of study, they should reconsider their plan to study here," says Ng, adding students should prepare at least RM13,000 to RM15,000 for one year of study.

Ng says the college also no longer accepts direct applica-

## NO regrets studying here



**ENRICHING** ...the presence of Chinese students in Malaysia adds an international flavour to the local education scene. From left: Wong Xu Fang, Wang Sheng Fei, Michael Zhu and Alfred Zhao.

Chinese students do not regret their foray to this part of the world.

"Hardship builds character," says Zhao who has been in the country for the past eight months.

He still thinks that the high agent fees he paid is worth the education here.

"Education here is still relatively cheaper; I do not have to work part-time to finance my studies," says the president of the Sedaya's Chinese Student Association.

"My roommate and I are able to sit through a news programme and are able to understand the news," he says with a smile.

Zhao says the issue of unscrupulous agents could be partly resolved by allowing selected Chinese government agencies, such as universities and education departments, to recruit students for Malaysian private institutions.

Despite his initial discontentment, Wong of Stamford has decided to continue his studies there.

"After all, this is what I have come for — to get an education. Since I have spent so much, I should not let the money go to waste.

"But if given a choice, I would have picked a university at a Western country," he says.

The Private Education Department in the Education Ministry says it has yet to receive any formal complaint from any international students.

"Students have to be careful when making their decision. They should do their homework before deciding on any college and not say they were not informed," says an official of the department.

By the same token, the Malaysian private colleges, perhaps with some assistance from the ministry, should do their homework and not let unscrupulous businessmen get in the way of their good reputation.

A zealous pursuit of high enrolment figures at all costs is but a short-term gain compared to the glowing reports from the Chinese students when they go home for good.

tions from individuals or agents. "Those who want to apply will have to do so through our office in China.

"We also helped most of our first and second batch students transfer to countries like the United States and Britain," he says.

While little could be done on students being fed misleading

information about local programmes, Ng urges the National Accreditation Board (LAN) to speed up its accreditation of courses run by the private colleges to resolve the issue of non-recognised courses.

"If the Chinese Government is concerned that the courses are not recognised by the Malaysian

Government, then the latter should enforce LAN's role. Once LAN accredits all courses, then all diploma and certificates will be recognised by our government," he says.

### No regrets

Despite the false promises and misinformation, most of the