

29/07/1998

STPM should be the only pre-U course

Dr K. Thilagawathi

I REFER to the report "More matriculation centres to be set up" (NST, June 22).

It is sad that two standards exist for pre-university education in Malaysia. Non-Bumiputeras and Bumiputeras who fail to secure matriculation seats are required to do the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia. Matriculation, started in the 1970s, is for Bumiputera Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia holders.

There are vast differences between the two pre-university courses although both admit SPM holders. STPM is of higher standard.

And unlike matriculation, STPM is well known worldwide. STPM has been the pre-U course for ages but matriculation is a recent introduction, planned originally for 20 years.

Sadly, after matriculation started, STPM gradually became a "neglected child" of the Ministry of Education. Due to this, SPM holders shunned STPM and resorted to private A levels and overseas studies. Only the financially restricted ones took up STPM.

As stated by the former Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Malaya, Royal Prof Ungku Aziz, the matriculation programmes have raised the academic standard of the Bumiputeras. So definitely they can cope with the STPM now.

Restoring the standard of STPM and making it the only pre-U course should be looked into seriously.

I feel that educational opportunities should be available to all ethnic groups without discrimination. The ministry should also give scholarships fairly.

In view of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's desire to make Malaysia a "regional centre of education" the ministry should take steps to raise the standard of education and adopt a uniform international medium of instruction to attract foreign students.