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Take up MRSM places, Chinese told

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MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting has urged Chinese students to take up the places allocated for non-Bumiputera in Mara Junior Science Colleges (MRSM).

Nanyang Siang Pau, highlighting Ong's call in a front page story yesterday, reported the Housing and Local Government Minister's concern on the lukewarm response by Chinese students in fulfilling the 906 non-Bumiputera quota offered by MRSM.

To date, there are only 142 Chinese students in 31 MRSM nationwide.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced in June last year that MRSM would allocate 10 per cent of its places to non-Bumiputera in a move to enhance racial integration.

Ong said initially 352 out of 524 Chinese students who applied for MRSM were accepted but some quit.

He said he had asked MCA Youth chief Datuk Ong Tee Keat to find out why Chinese students were not keen to study at MRSM.

Ka Ting also said the Cabinet had entrusted the Chinese-based parties in the Government to formulate a plan on how to increase the number of Chinese in the public sector.

The Oriental Daily News yesterday quoted him as saying that the current number of Chinese in the public sector did not correspond to the country's multiracial composition.

Ka Ting said the MCA would appoint a think-tank which would conduct studies and research on the matter.

Higher Education Department director Professor Datuk Dr Hassan Said was reported as saying that views from various experts were being sought on the possibility of admitting the Senior Middle Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) as an equivalent qualification to Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM).

Speaking to Sin Chew in an interview published yesterday, he said although the UEC was not recognised by the Government as an entry requirement for local public universities, their holders could still further their studies in private colleges or foreign universities where it was accepted.

Nonetheless, Dr Hassan emphasised that to admit the Senior Middle UEC as an equivalent qualification to STPM (pengsamatarafan) was a totally different matter to recognising (pengikhtirafan) the certificate.

The UEC is the main examination certificate offered by the independent Chinese secondary schools (Do Zung) and like the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia and STPM, has two levels of examination.

Form One to Form Three students are required to sit for the Junior Middle Section while those in Form Four to Form Six sit for the Senior Middle Section examination.