

## **DAP: Why the secrecy over maths and science marks?**

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**By Dukau Papau**

A Sarawak opposition leader has accused the Education Ministry of trying to "hide something" by refusing to disclose the passing marks for Form Five examinations for Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and English citing such information falls under the Official Secrets Act.

chong chieng jen interview 141108 02"What is so secret about the passing marks for these subjects? Do they pose a security threat to the nation that the ministry has to classify these grades under the Official Secret Act (OSA)?" asked state DAP chief Chong Chieng Jen (left) asked.

"It defies all logic to classify the marks for public examinations as official secret," he added.

Chong, the MP for Bandar Kuching had wanted to find out from the education minister the passing marks for grades A, B, C, D and E for Mathematics, Additional mathematics, physics, chemistry and English over the past seven years.

"Instead I received a written reply from the ministry telling me that the preparation for examination papers and materials including marks scored by candidates are confidential as they fall under the Official Secrets Act.

"It is ludicrous for the ministry to provide me a written reply by quoting Part 11, Section 4 of the Education Act 1996," he said, pointing out that the section says 'for each district or for such other area in a state as may be determined by the minister and education officer designed as such for the purposes of this Act'.

"It has no relevance to the Official Secrets Act. This tells us that the ministry has lot things to hide so much so that they have to hide the passing marks as official secrets," he said.

Sliding marks prompted questions

Chong said: "What prompted me to ask these questions is that there have been very obvious drops in the standard of Mathematics and Science of students in Malaysia when they participated in the Trends in international Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

"In the latest TIMSS 2011, Malaysia is lagging so far behind other nations such as South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan which occupy the top five spots worldwide.

"Malaysia scored an average 440 points in Mathematics in Form Two, which is equivalent to eighth grade worldwide," said Chong.

He said in science Malaysia scored 426 points, tying with Syria and just pipping Palestine, Georgia and Oman which totalled up 420 points in each of the tests.

"There are huge drops in the standard of mathematics and science subjects of students in Malaysia, and our position has dropped from 22 in 1997 to 32 in 2012.

"But I was surprised and shocked to receive the written reply from the ministry of education saying that the passing marks for these subjects are secret," he said, adding that he is adamant in seeking the truth.

Chong said that rumours have been making the rounds that the passing mark for additional mathematics and science subjects in the SPM examinations is 20 based on the results of students who continued to score 20 marks in school examinations and managed to pass their public examinations.

"I don't want to say that the education system in the country is a failure. But we want the of education minister to explain this matter to the public," he said.

He said that the minister has always been shouting that the nation's passing rates are rising by the year with the quality of our students also improving.

"But when these student step out of Malaysia, and compete with other countries, the standard drops each year," he said.

"As parents we are worried about our children's education," he added.

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