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PRIME NEWS

Najib reassures students

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VARSITY SPOTS: 'Plight of 18,000 students who failed to gain entry looked into'

KUALA LUMPUR

THE cabinet will meet this week to help some 18,000 students who failed to get into universities despite qualifying for a spot.

The assurance came from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who said yesterday on Twitter that he was aware of the problem and that the government would spare no efforts to help the affected students.

"I know some of you are disappointed about not getting a place in universities, but don't give up.

"We will discuss the matter during the cabinet meeting this week. We will try to find the best solution to resolve this matter," he said.

Last Friday, MCA education bureau chairman Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong had called on the government to explain the low number of enrolment among Chinese students at public institutions of higher learning.

Wee claimed that only 19 per cent of successful applicants were Chinese. He had also claimed that there were also students who ob-

tained a perfect 4.0 cumulative grade point average (CGPA) but were still denied a place at universities.

Deputy Education Minister II P. Kamalanathan told the *New Straits Times* that Najib's assurance demonstrated the government's commitment to improving the people's lot.

"The announcement shows the prime minister is sincere and concerned about the students' woes and future. I believe that the government would come to an amicable solution," he said via a text message.

Kamalanathan had previously said that the meeting was scheduled for Friday.

He had earlier been quoted as saying that the problem could have been caused by some students wrongly filling up their university application forms.

Their applications might have been rejected when they stated their unwillingness to be placed in other courses than the eight they had picked in the forms.

In the event a student fails to get any of the eight courses, the application was rejected automati-



The government has promised to find the best solution for those who did not gain a university spot.

cally.

It was disclosed that 68,702 applications were received through the university application system. Of the 57,802 who qualified, only 39,580 were accepted, leaving 18,222 students without a spot.

In an immediate response, MCA vice-president Datuk Seri Chor Chee Heung said he was not surprised that Najib had responded to the problem.

"I am happy to hear that the prime minister will address this problem and seek solutions to help the students. MCA had also received complaints on the matter and this problem should be resolved immediately.

"I believe the government should look into the principle of meri-

toocracy as a solution to this issue. Enrolment of the students at universities should be based on the students' academic performance and extracurricular activities.

"Something is wrong when students who obtained 3.5 and above for their CGPA failed to secure any offers from universities."

Chor said meritocracy should be practised to ensure top students, who scored a CGPA of between 3.5 and 4.0, could pursue their education at universities.

On claims that the students' applications were rejected after they filled up their forms incorrectly, Chor said these claims should be supported by proof to avoid unscrupulous quarters from manipulating the issue.

"The Education Ministry should support the claim by providing proof. This could be done by making public the wrongly filled forms."

MIC Youth Higher Education Bureau chief Mahaganapathy Dass hoped the government would look into the root cause of the problem to avoid a recurrence.

"At the same time, I believe that the government and the Education Ministry should be transparent on matters pertaining to enrolment of university students."

He also suggested that the government revamp the students' admission division.

"The education department should come up with a new mechanism to address this problem."