

# E d u c a t i o n U p d a t e

## GO TRADITIONAL

The Health Ministry is considering giving recognition to courses in traditional and complementary medicine also accrediting several universities in China, India and Indonesia.

This will happen with the introduction of the Traditional and Complementary Medicine Control Act, which will be tabled at the Parliament next year, to better regulate the sector.

'The ministry has had preliminary talks with the Higher Education Ministry and the National Accreditation Board regarding this matter and further talks have been approved by the Cabinet,' said **Health Minister Datuk Dr Chua Soi Lek**.

The Act, once enforced, will enable traditional and complimentary medicine practitioners to ensure that they have training approved by the Government and follow the code of ethics.

According to ministry statistics, there are 219 foreign traditional and complimentary medicine practitioners in Malaysia, mostly in the field of Ayurvedic medicine, massage and reflexology.

'Even the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia is offering courses in TCM. Local universities should look into this,' Chua said after opening the Women's Health and Asian Traditional Medicine Conference and Exhibition on July 26.

Dr Thomas Ong, the president of the Malaysian Association of Chiropractic Practitioners, told The Star that there was a need for accreditation to weed out bogus chiropractors.

'At the moment, anybody can offer the service even though they do not have the qualifications to do so,' he said.

## COLLEGES WARNED

TWO private colleges faced the wrath of the higher education regulators when they lost the right to bring in foreign students.

In late-July, the Higher Education Ministry made public its decision to withdraw recognition for two private institutions of higher learning and while three others were served with warnings for failure to maintain their course management quality performance.

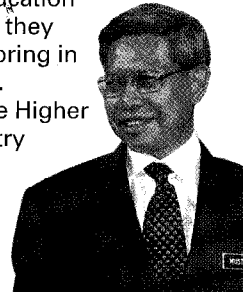
**Datuk Mustapa Mohamed**, the minister in charge, said the recognition for Regions Colleges well as the International City Technology Institute to recruit foreign students had been withdrawn.

Receiving warnings were Plaza International College, Gemilang College and Rima College.

'The ministry is conducting verification inspections to assess the capability of private institutions of higher learning to recruit international students,' he told Parliament.

In the same briefing, the minister said that the number of international students at the higher institutions of learning grew to 41,559 last year from 32,254 students in 2004, a 29% jump.

According to the statistics, in 2004, there were 6,697 students in the public institutions of higher learning and 25,557 students in the private institutions. In 2005, the figures were 7,656 and 33,903 students, respectively.



## FIXING ICT GRADUATES

The Government is very much aware of the need of smart industry-university collaborations in its efforts to equip graduates with industry-relevant skills and other skill sets.

This is on top of the glaring need to equip students with the "last-mile" skills, including industry certifications and soft skills, among ICT graduates that often hamper their prospects of employment.

Hence, the Government has come up with a number of long-term strategies to address the issue of unemployment among local information and communications technology (ICT) graduates, according to Deputy Science, Technology and Innovation **Minister Datuk Kong Cho Ha**.

'Industry-university collaboration is vital, as it will significantly enhance the syllabi and courses offered. Thus, we will be able to produce more graduates with the skills needed by the industry,' he said.

With this in mind, he said that the Government has seen the need of ICT courses offered by multinational companies should be incorporated into the curriculum of the universities.

'This will save the graduates from having to go through another round of training after graduation,' he said.

Providing some data, more than 16% of some 60,000 unemployed graduates in the country are in the ICT discipline.

## HIRE GRADUATES, PSD TOLD

There are some 30,000 vacancies in the civil service and the Deputy Prime Minister wants this to be filled, on the double.

Hence, **Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak** has urged the Public Services Department (PSD) and Public Services Commission to speed up the recruitment of graduates, partly alleviating the problem of unemployed graduates now at 60,000.

When chairing a special committee in mid-July, he said there are 74,000 vacancies in the government sector with 30,000 posts requiring graduates.

Initial reports stated that some 24,000 graduates did not have jobs while 36,000 were either under-employed or have jobs outside of their qualifications.

Local universities should pay particular attention to the statistics. Out of the 60,000 unemployed graduates, women and Bumiputeras comprised 70% certainly a cause for concern for local universities.

What were they engaged in during their varsity days? A breakdown shows that the majority of the students were pursuing courses in administration, business and human resources (19%) followed by computer and information technology (16%), engineering (14%) and arts and social science (12%).

As part of the remedial work to get the graduates up and running, the Finance Ministry would be meeting government-linked companies including private companies that were offered double tax deductions to provide executive graduate training programmes for the unemployed graduates.



## 9MP EDUCATION PROJECTS

The relevant Government machinery is busy putting the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) into action.

For this year, the Education Ministry has identified 54 new construction projects amounting to RM980.5 million.

On top of that, some 220 projects involving the upgrading of schools and higher education institutions have also been identified.

**Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein** said the ministry was prepared to carry out the construction of more than 450 schools as listed out by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday under the 9MP.

The new projects involve nine primary schools at a cost of RM82 million, 10 full boarding schools (RM400 million) and 35 secondary schools (RM353 million). The 220 projects for upgrading will cost RM195 million.

With memories of the failed school projects in recent years, the ministry is promising better systems in place this time around, including tougher stance on irresponsible contractors.

The authorities also promise that contractors with a history of not completing school building projects would be blacklisted and the list will extend to shareholders and directors. On top of that, companies that offer bribes to government officials would also be blacklisted. —

**By Lynda Ng**