

PSD to discuss new bursary model implementation today

By **RAHIMY RAHIM** and **R.S.N. MURALI**
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: A statement will be issued by the Public Service Department (PSD) as early as this week to clear up confusion over the newly announced "sponsorship model" for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) students with excellent results.

It was learnt that a meeting was scheduled today to discuss the implementation of the new bursary model following the revised Budget 2016 announced by the Government last month.

"There is still some confusion over the matter which has yet to be ironed out by several stakeholders.

"PSD is expected to release a statement by this week," said a source from the department yesterday.

A Chinese daily reported that the PSD website had recently uploaded new guidelines on the "sponsorship model", requiring bursary recipients to become civil servants upon graduation if they wanted the sponsorships to be converted

into scholarships.

Those working for government-linked companies would need to pay back 50% of the sum while those opting for the private sector would have to repay the entire amount.

Previously, those who obtained first-class degree honours in their studies would have the sponsorships converted into scholarships.

According to the source, this move was, among others, aimed at bringing back overseas graduates who had yet to report back and serve their respective agencies.

In the Budget 2016 re-calibration announcement, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced that all four PSD sponsorship programmes for 2016 would be continued, with the top 20 SPM students being able to further their studies at leading universities in the world.

However, the 744 students under the Bursary Graduate Programme will now have to study locally, in public or private institutions of higher learning.

The decision came as a shock to the 744 who had scored 9A+ in the SPM 2013 exams and

aspired to study in the top 20 universities in the world.

The bursary covers the students' pre-university studies at local institutions, after which they can continue with their first degree either locally or overseas if they manage to secure places from universities, usually top-ranking ones, that are approved by the Government.

In Malacca, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong said some parents had been shocked by the latest guidelines on PSD's bursary graduate programme.

"I myself was unaware of the latest guidelines until parents messaged me about the issue.

"I need to understand the content of PSD's administrative circular on bursary and recheck why the guidelines were necessary," he said after visiting the Jasin Buddhist association on Saturday.

Dr Wee said he was also concerned over the fate of these bursary recipients should there be a freeze in the intake of civil servants due to budget constraints.