

Ethnic minority students fly high in DSE exam

A multilingual master

"I chose to stay quiet," says 16-year-old Anisah Hussain, describing her experience of adapting to attending a Cantonese-speaking school for the first time.

Her life turned upside down when she and her family moved from Guangzhou to Hong Kong.

Anisah, who has Pakistani and Indian origins, had lived in mainland China since the age of two and moved to Hong Kong when she was 10. She started at Hong Kong Taoist Association The Yuen Yuen Institute No 3 Secondary School.

"I only knew how to speak Mandarin," she says. "When I came here, the atmosphere was completely different. [Cantonese] was hard for me to understand, which also made me a bit too scared to communicate with people."

She soon found her school and local friends to be very accommodating, and her Cantonese improved rapidly.

She was appointed as a Biliteracy and Trilingualism Campaign Ambassador by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research for two consecutive years from Form Five.

Anisah will soon return to the mainland for university, having received an unconditional acceptance to Huaqiao University, where she hopes to study business administration. She plans to follow in her parents' footsteps and work in the cargo industry.

From lack of support to legal studies

"I should just drop out and work," Halima Sadia Yaqub used to tell herself when she was struggling with her studies.

She says she never received any support at her original secondary school in Hong Kong.

Halima, an 18-year-old Hongkonger whose father is Pakistani and mother is Filipino, struggled with language as the only non-Chinese student. She says her teachers told her she could repeat Form Two or "go back to her home country to study".

Instead, her family decided to change schools. Once she began Form Three at Hong Kong Taoist Association The Yuen Yuen Institute No 3 Secondary School, she received the encouragement she needed.

As a Form Five student, she became recognised as one of the top three "outstanding" youngsters under the Sai Kung Tseung Kwan O Outstanding Youth Commendation Scheme.

Her Mandarin has also improved, and she now has her eyes on studying at Huaqiao University in mainland China. She wants to study law and become a Hong Kong police officer.

She admits it will be tough to study fully in Chinese, but says she is ready for the challenge.



Yuen Yuen Institute No 3 Secondary School student Anisah Hussain. Photo: Sun Yeung



Yuen Yuen Institute No. 3 Secondary School student Halima Sadia Yaqub. Photo: Sun Yeung