Taiwan to attend World Health Assembly

Taipei, Taiwan: China has allowed Taiwan to attend the annual United Nations-sponsored World Health Assembly (WHA) for the first time this year, a further sign of warming ties between the two sides. A spokesman for China's Taiwan Affairs Office said that Beijing had a 'positive' attitude toward the issue.

Beijing, backed by about 170 diplomatic allies including the world's most powerful nations, has usually blocked Taiwan before the island can be formally invited. A spokesman for China's Taiwan Affairs Office would only say that Beijing had a 'positive' attitude toward the issue.

Enrolment quotas missed in Japan

From news reports

According to a survey by the Japanese newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun, more than half of private dental colleges and schools across Japan fell short of enrolment quotas for the academic year. Three schools even saw enrolment fall by 40 per cent, which numbers between 51 and 45 students.

The number of people who took entrance examinations for private dental colleges or schools this year was 4,975, a sharp fall from over 10,000 in previous years.

According to major prep schools and other sources, the biggest reason for the fall in enrolment is a belief that the nation has a surplus of dentists. In 1990, there were 74,000 dentists, the number of which rose each year to 87,000 in 2006, yet there was no rise in total dental care costs over this period. This led to excessive competition among dental clinics.

The fall in enrolment is expected to hurt private dental colleges and schools because of a decrease in income streams, such as students' enrolment fees and initial payments for the freshmen year, which are usually between US$72,000 and US$10,000 per student.

The Japanese Association of Private Dental Schools plans to investigate possible countermeasures, out of fear that the shortage could lead to the collapse of the nation's dental care system.

Observers say it will be difficult for colleges and schools to draw up effective countermeasures to reverse the situation any time soon. Commenting on the issue, Toshiyuki Yamauchi, Vice Chairman of the Japanese Association of Private Dental Schools, told Yomiuri Shimbun, “We had anticipated some fall in enrolment but not anything like this. We’re going to have to explain to the public how important dental care is.”

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