

# Quota system can go, says Dr M

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'Places in varsities will be given to others if bumis don't want them'

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**PETALING JAYA, Sun:** The quota system for bumiputras and non-bumiputras in public universities will be abolished if that is what the people want, the prime minister said today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government is prepared to abolish the quota system, initiated 42 years ago to assist bumiputras in pursuing higher education, if public opinion favours the option.

"It's up to the people, if they don't want it, we won't have it," he said, commenting on the shortfall in the number of bumiputra students who have taken up places in universities for the 2001/2002 academic year.

Mahathir said: "Just because there are those uninterested in education, it doesn't mean the others will also have to be deprived," he said, adding that places will be offered to non-bumiputra candidates if attempts by the government to encourage bumiputras fail.

He noted that there are many intelligent non-bumiputra students who will be attracted by foreign offers if they cannot find adequate opportunities here, and this will only lead to a brain drain.

The quota is 55:45 for bumiputras and non-bumiputras respectively in local universities and selection of eligible bumiputra students this

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## Need to be fair to interested non-bumis, says PM

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year fell short by 7,618 of the total places offered.

This led to calls for the unfilled places to be offered to non-bumiputra high-achievers as many of their applications for entry were rejected or they were offered courses

other than what they chose.

Responding to a suggestion by Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob that the vacant bumiputra places be offered to non-bumiputra students, Mahathir said the government will do its best in seeing that the quota is filled.

However, the prime minister stressed the need to be fair to the non-bumiputras who should be offered the opportunity to go to university if their bumiputra peers do not show enough interest.

Yesterday, Adnan said the opportunities should be opened to non-bumiputra stu-

dents who have excelled in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia as many with straight As failed to gain admission.

Enrolment in the 14 public institutions of higher learning for the 2001/2002 academic year totalled 30,832, a drop of 8.7% compared with last year's intake of 33,783.