

Don't focus on sentiments: PM

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'Increasing varsity intake quota will not serve purpose if bumiputras are not qualified or interested'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri: Increasing the quota of bumiputras in public institutions of higher learning will not serve the purpose if many of them are not qualified or even interested to take up the

places, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The (bumiputra) students do not want to take up difficult subjects. They only want to take up easy ones," he told a news conference after attending Umno's 55th anniversary celebrations.

Mahathir was commenting on the possibility of increasing the bumiputra quota in

public universities to 66% from 55% now, to reflect the country's racial composition.

Yesterday, Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said that the government is willing to consider the proposal for a 66:34 ratio as it reflects the current racial composition.

He said the proposal made by academic Datuk Zainal Abidin Wahid is "logical" as

the current quota of 55:45 which was made when the New Economic Policy (NEP) was drafted 30 years ago.

Mahathir said a quota of 100% enrolment can be granted to bumiputras but it would not serve the purpose.

In response to a question, he said the country does not depend solely on a quota system based on racial make-up.

"If that is so, there would

never have been a 30% bumiputra equity and 40% Chinese equity ruling in the NEP," he said.

"If we concentrate too much on sentiments and emotions, we will be ruined."

However, he said, the decision whether to increase or maintain the quota system lies with the people.

"We want to follow their wishes. If there are sufficient

numbers of Malays asking for the abolition of the quota system, we will do away with it," he said.

He also slammed PAS for its apprehension in voicing the party's opinion on the issue. "It is actually in favour of the system, but won't admit it for fear of losing DAP's support. It is more concerned about party interests than about the Malays," he said.