

Cabinet supports meritocracy move

Net - 2 / 22 / 2011

'PM's feelings shared by Umno leaders'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. The Cabinet today came in full support for the proposal to implement the meritocracy policy for entry into public universities, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad explained the meritocracy policy at length at the Cabinet meeting and all the ministers supported him.

"The ministers gave their full support to the measures which will be taken to tackle the academic weakness of Malay students," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby.

Abdullah was asked about Umno Youth's call for Dr Mahathir yesterday to reconsider the proposal of the meritocracy policy.

The Government had last Friday proposed to take radical steps to tackle the problem of Bumiputera students lagging behind in education.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir was dissatisfied with the performance of Malay students, whether in sec-

ondary schools or institutions of higher learning, and this feeling was shared by other Umno leaders.

If the policy is adopted, university entrance for students will be based on qualification and not on racial quota.

Abdullah said the proposed meritocracy system would be discussed further and the Government might adopt other approaches to overcome the problem of declining academic performance among Bumiputera students.

Abdullah, who is also Umno deputy president, said the party's management committee which met today agreed that the Umno headquarters should hold a meeting to explain the meritocracy policy in detail to all members and division leaders.

The meeting would be held as soon as possible because many Umno members wanted to know more about the policy and the actions to be taken by the Government to overcome the problem.

"The Prime Minister and all the Umno leaders are dissatisfied with the performance of the Malay students in their studies.

"If the performance of Malay

children is weak, it will be difficult for the Malay race to face a globalised world in future," he said.

On Pas' action in continuing with their *ceramah* although it had been banned, Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said the opposition party should comply with police directive.

"It is wrong and should not be done.

"If the Government and the police have decided, it is for the Government to strictly enforce the regulation," he said.

On non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which have distributed pamphlets pressing for the abolishment of the Internal Security Act at the Parliament lobby this afternoon, Abdullah said it should not have happened.

"We don't know how they entered the lobby and did that," he said.

About 40 people from a group called "The Movement to Abolish the ISA" handed over a proposed private member's Bill to Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim, Backbenchers Club members and opposition party MPs.