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Call for task force to monitor system

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NIBONG TEBAL, Thurs. - The Umno supreme council should set up a special task force to assist the Government in monitoring the gradual introduction of the merit-based system for public universities.

In making the call, Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin said such a task force could monitor the implementation of the new policy and make recommendations to the Government, if there were any weaknesses.

"Such a task force can help ensure that all supporting elements, such as the financial strength of Malay families and the academic qualifications of students, are well in place when the system is fully introduced.

"This is to ensure that the new policy does not bring complications to the Malays," he said after launching the Kampung Padang Lallang Gerakan Desa Wawasan's Consumers Club in Simpang Ampat near here today.

He said the gradual introduction of the system should not be misconstrued as a sign that Umno had dropped its struggle for the Malays.

"Umno has never and will not ever shirk its responsibilities to the Malays. However, the new policy is timely to arrest the decline in academic excellence and moral decadence of Malay youths," said Muhyiddin, who is also the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister.

In Shah Alam, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Samsuddin said the system would serve as a wake up call for the Malays.

Abdul Aziz said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had observed in the last 44 years that there were excellent Bumiputera students just like the Chinese and Indians.

"God had created all men with equal intelligence. But since this country has been good to Bumiputeras they think it is a gift which they can misuse. In the process, the Bumiputeras think that whatever they do the Government will look after them. They have become complacent.

"The PM does not want this. He has given a shock not only to the Bumiputeras but everyone."

Abdul Aziz said Dr Mahathir had introduced the system because he knew that Bumiputeras were not incapable.

Abdul Aziz was speaking after attending the excellent student award presentation ceremony at the Section 9 Secondary School.

He also witnessed the student exchange programme between Malaysia and Japan. Ten students from Japan would be staying with Malaysian families for three days to experience Malaysian life and culture.

On the feedback from the people, he said some were worried, some were scared and others were thankful.

"Some are worried because they feel their children cannot gain entry into universities. The quota system would still be there but they must make the best use of the opportunities provided.

"We are not talking about taking away the quota system at all. If we did away with quota the whole country will jump at us.

"If the Bumiputeras complete their matriculation but do not qualify to enter universities then we have to review again as to why there are more non-Bumiputeras in most fields."

Abdul Aziz warned foreign students studying here not to influence local students with their political ideologies.

"This is a multi-racial country and they cannot preach their ideologies to create chaos. We can take action against them including arresting them under the Internal Security Act."

In Penang, Former Universiti Sains Malaysia vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Ishak Tambi Kechik said the Government's intention in implementing the new system was to heighten excellence and competition among students.

He said the principle of merit should also be introduced in all organisations and should be welcomed by all levels of society including technocrats and bureaucrats.

"With a system of merit, these people can be assured that they can compete with each another without any special privileges given to them."

Ishak said USM would enhance excellence among Bumiputera students through its Science Matriculation programme.

Speaking after being conferred an honorary doctorate in Science at the university's 30th Convocation ceremony in Penang today, Ishak said the future of Bumiputera students was dependent on the existence of a sustainable education system.