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`Not practical for the moment`

THE proposal to revise the higher education quota so that 15 per cent of the intake is based on merit is a good idea for the future but not practical for the time being, said MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu yesterday.

He said Indians at the moment might not be able to compete with the Chinese for seats allocated according to merit.

"This will be a very useful proposition for Malaysian Indians in the future."

Samy Vellu was commenting on New Straits Times Press (M) Berhad executive director Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad's suggestion on Saturday that the Bumiputera quota in higher education be reduced to 50 per cent and the non-Bumiputera quota to 35 per cent to make way for the 15 per cent quota for students who merit entry into institutions of higher learning.

Abdullah, speaking at the National Unity Convention, had said that Malays would be better equipped for modern-day survival if meritocracy was implemented in stages.

Samy Vellu, who is also Works Minister, said the plight of Indians was almost the same as that of Bumiputeras.

"We have both been left behind where tertiary education is concerned."

He said meritocracy had its shortcomings as Indians who could only obtain eight 1As in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia could not compete with those who had 11 or 12 1As.

Samy Vellu also welcomed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that he was unhappy with the racial representation in universities where Malays seemed overdependent on the quota system.

"We want all Malaysians to have sufficient places in local universities with special attention being given to Indians."

He said the number of Indian doctors would be reduced to only one per cent of all in the profession in 10 years time if nothing was done to boost their numbers.

This was because many in the profession would be facing retirement with none to replace their numbers, he said.

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