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Meritocracy guidelines (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - A Cabinet committee will be set up soon to draw up standard guidelines on the merit-based system to be followed by all public universities and university colleges, and to determine how the system is to be implemented.

The various methods under consideration on how the system should work include:

- * Raising slightly the minimum entry requirements for Bumiputera students as proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday; and

- * To have students adhere to a certain standard of performance while at university.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said today whatever method eventually implemented by next year would not cause a decrease in the number of Bumiputera students at university, nor would it affect the quota system.

On students adhering to a certain standard of performance, Musa said they must achieve a certain level in their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) or else certain privileges would be withdrawn.

"This is meritocracy too but it has nothing to do with the quota."

Speaking to reporters after the Ministry's post-Cabinet meeting today, Musa said it was premature to say which method would be implemented.

"There is no decision yet nor detailed plans ... like what has been reported in the newspapers. That is why further discussions are needed.

"The Prime Minister (only) made a suggestion yesterday. He said `for example'. There are no particular plans yet."

It was reported that Dr Mahathir, in a Press conference after a special briefing for Umno officials on his earlier statement on meritocracy pertaining to university entry, said a system for selecting Bumiputera students for admission into universities based on merit would be introduced.

The Prime Minister said the move was intended to encourage Bumiputera students to seek academic excellence.

It also serves as a warning that they cannot expect unending and unqualified support in the field of education.

Musa said the application of merit was not directly related to the quota system.

"Now how exactly we are going to do it (implement the merit system), is something we have to look at."

On a report in The Star that places not filled by Bumiputera students would be given to non-Bumiputerans, Musa clarified that whatever system implemented would not in any way affect the quota.

"All issues relating to the preservation of the quota would be looked at carefully.

"That is why we are planning the move in stages."

Asked whether this was an assurance that the current ratio for Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera students would remain, he said: "The quota will be there all the time. People tend to interpret the issue of merit as having something to do with the quota.

"That is not necessarily true. So, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, we may raise slightly the minimum qualification or it could be implemented in other ways."

Musa said if the method eventually implemented affected admissions, entrance procedures would be standardised within Unit Pusat Universiti.

"If it has to do with the preservation of performance, guidelines will be prepared and agreed upon by all universities before implementation. For instance, if we are talking about a certain CGPA level, what level is it we are talking about?"

He said the principle of merit should be upheld by all students.