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`Merit-based system must be transparent to ensure effectiveness'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The merit-based system to be implemented in all public universities and university colleges must be transparent to ensure its effectiveness.

Malaysian Youth Movement president Stephen Doss said the criteria that must be fulfilled by students under the system must be clear, and if a certain level of academic achievement was needed for varsity admission, the results a student must obtain should be made known to the public.

"For instance, if the minimum entry requirements for Bumiputera students is raised, the new cut-off points must be published.

"Students and the public must know what cut-off points are being used and whether all universities are adhering to standard guidelines."

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad had said yesterday a Cabinet committee would be set up soon to draw up standard guidelines on the merit-based system, and to determine how the system was 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, and to have students adhere to a certain standard of performance while at universities.

It was reported on Thursday that Dr Mahathir, in a Press conference after a special briefing for Umno officials on his earlier statement on meritocracy, 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.

Doss said the public must be sure, for instance, that Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Malaya were adhering to the guidelines. "It cannot be left to the respective faculties to decide what they want to do.

"If there is no transparency, the public will not take the move seriously. They will treat it as a flash in the pan, and wait for it to blow over in time."

He said as it was now, the criteria for achieving merit was still very subjective.

Doss said the movement was disappointed with Parti Rakyat Malaysia and Keadilan for criticising the merit-based system.

"Both parties claim they fight for equal rights for all races and now they are speaking out against this. It is obvious they are playing the racial card and that is very disappointing behaviour."

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