

01 AUG 2001

Abdullah-Meritocracy

MINISTERS SUPPORT MERITOCRACY POLICY

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- The Cabinet today expressed 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 fully supported him.

"The Cabinet ministers gave their full support to whatever measures to be taken to ensure that the problem of academic weakness of Malay students is overcome," he told reporters in the Parliament lobby here.

He was commenting on Umno Youth's call to Dr Mahathir yesterday to reconsider the proposal to implement the meritocracy policy.

The government last Friday proposed to take radical steps to tackle the problem of bumiputera students falling behind in education, including the possibility of basing public university entrance on meritocracy.

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 before implementation and the government might adopt other approaches to overcome the problem of decline in 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 hold a special meeting to explain the meritocracy policy in detail to all the 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 because 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.

"Moreover, we know that the economy of the future will focus more on knowledge like the K-economy which needs the Malay race to have a capable workforce in order to compete.

"It is appropriate for Umno in view of this scenario to do something because Umno feels that the progress or backwardness of the Malay race, the dignity of the Malay race, depend on the level of its success in the knowledge field," he said.

Commenting on PAS' move to hold ceramah despite the ban, Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said the opposition should abide by the police directive.

He said that if the government and the police had made a ruling it was the duty of the government to strictly enforce that ruling.

On the distribution of pamphlets by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) at the Parliament lobby today calling for the tabling of a bill to abolish the Internal Security Act (ISA), Abdullah said it should not have occurred.

"We don't know how they entered and did such a thing, it should not have happened," he said.

About 40 people from a group calling itself the Abolish the ISA Movement had handed copies of the purported bill to Minister in the Prime

Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim, opposition MPs and members of the government backbenchers club urging that it be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat.

-- BERNAMA

ZAI ZAI JK