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Mahathir-Merit

QUOTA SYSTEM RETAINED BUT BETTER PERFORMANCE NEEDED FROM BUMIPUTERA STUDENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 8 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the quota system for admission to public universities will be retained but bumiputera students will have to do better to qualify for admission in future.

The prime minister said the move to raise the entry qualification was to ensure better quality bumiputera students.

"We are giving them warning right now. Exactly what is the cut-off point is something that we will determine later. But they can rest assured that if they don't do well they may not get into the universities. Even if they think they can get 10As, they better sit down and study harder to get 11As," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this at a news conference after giving a closed-door briefing to Umno leaders on the proposed meritocracy system for entrance to public universities at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

The prime minister said the higher qualification requirement was a preliminary step by the government to implement the meritocracy system for admission to the universities in stages.

He said that if the government imposed the meritocracy conditions all at once there would be too few bumiputera students, so it would start on a small scale according to disciplines.

Then, when their performance improved, the qualification requirement would rise so that finally their accomplishments would be on par with that of the other races.

"If we do it all at once according to meritocracy it would have disastrous results on the Malay students to the extent that there may not be any Malay student in certain fields.

"Although we say we will use meritocracy, it will not be enforced in one fell swoop on the students, instead we will give them warnings so that they will study and get good results and then the qualifications for university entrance will be raised another notch," he said.

Dr Mahathir said, for example, that if the qualification to do medicine was 7As for Malay students, the condition would be raised to 8As and those who did not achieve this would not enter the university.

He said although the quota system would be retained the government hoped that there would be enough bumiputera students to fill the quota but if it was not filled it did not matter so long as the students who were admitted were of high quality.

"We want to achieve the quota but we don't want to achieve it such that even the useless go in..it'll be pointless," he said.

The measure would be implemented as soon as possible, as early as the next academic session, and his warning today would enable the Malay students to seriously prepare if they wanted to enter the university next year, he said, adding that he was confident that they could do.

He hoped to see better performance among the Malay students at all levels of education but stressed that they must do exceptionally well in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) examinations to enter the university.

High qualifications were also needed for students who wanted to do matriculation.

He also reiterated that undergraduates whose involvement in other activities affected their studies would be expelled.

He said the poor performance of students in schools was due, among others, to the fact that some teachers entrusted with moral education, like religious teachers, taught the politics of hatred instead of religion.

As a result, the students did not understand religion and were easily influenced by nonsensical teachings like devil worship and other negative activities, he said.

The government was studying appropriate action against the religious teachers concerned, he added.

-- BERNAMA

AFY KHY JK