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UM to keep science centre open

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Universiti Malaya, taking heed of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice to keep its Pusat Asasi Sains open, today said it will arrange discussions with the Education Ministry on Monday, to sort out the mechanism of future student intakes.

Vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Anuar Zaini Mohd Zain said it has decided to keep the centre, which was established 23 years ago, open following Dr Mahathir's advice.

"I received a letter from the Prime Minister on Jan 23 requesting for the centre to remain open," he told a Press conference here.

It was reported that the centre which offers pre-university level courses in science to Bumiputera students, would be closed in April.

The centre was established to enhance the academic achievement of Bumiputera students at pre-university level.

Speaking to newsmen in Kedah yesterday, Dr Mahathir felt that the centre should remain open.

The issue was also discussed at the Umno supreme council meeting in Malacca on Monday.

It is learnt that the decision to keep the centre open was made at a special meeting chaired by Anuar Zaini this morning.

Anuar Zaini was reported to have said last week that he would stick with the decision to shut down the centre despite calls, including that from Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, to do otherwise.

With the decision overturned, Anuar Zaini said urgent discussions need to be held with the ministry, especially on matters regarding the intake of students.

He said this was because the university had stopped taking in students since the ministry's matriculation centres were set up two years ago.

"At this time, the university is handling the last batch of 196 students in campus."

"We will discuss with the ministry and get their views on what sort of mechanism can be used for the next student intake session."

Anuar Zaini said there was competition with other universities offering science-based programmes for students from the ministry's matriculation centres.

He said it would have to sort out how students from the matriculation centres can be absorbed into the university's science and technology-based faculties.

"The number of Bumiputera students that must be absorbed in these faculties for the next session is about 1,750."

Besides this, the problem of accommodation must also be looked into, he said.

"All these have to be discussed and sorted out with the Education Ministry on Monday."

Earlier, Anuar Zaini received a memorandum from Umno Youth, led by its exco member and education bureau chairman Dr Adham Baba, urging the university to look into the matter.

In response, Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad welcomed the decision and said ministry officials were ready for discussions to iron out problems.

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