

# Meritocracy system to be done in stages

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Education Ministry will start implementing "meritocracy" in stages when deciding on applications for entry into public universities.

Higher Education Department director Prof Dr Hassan Said said a selection meeting would be held next month to decide on the cut-off points for entry into specific courses but declined to state which universities and courses were involved.

"We will discuss the cut-off points during the selection meeting as they have wide implications.

"Students whose points fall below the cut-off might not be entertained by the computer," he told a press conference when announcing student intake into public universities for the 2002/2003

academic session.

Prof Hassan said the move would foster stronger competitive spirit among students.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last year that the merit system for students' admission into public universities would be implemented this year in the arts, science and technology faculties.

He had said the aim was not to implement meritocracy fully as there was a need to ensure the number of Malay students into universities was not drastically reduced.

Commenting on the statement by National Economic Action Council (NEAC) executive-director Datuk Mustapa Mohamed on Wednesday that institutions of higher learning should tailor their courses to the needs of employment mar-

ket, Prof Hassan said there was unemployment whenever there were economic problems.

Mustapa had also advised students to consider their choice of courses carefully so that they were more marketable upon joining the workforce.

He added that with 72,000 students expected to graduate from local universities this year, there was a strain on the local job market, with less demand for graduates trained in non-science related fields.

Prof Hassan said the ministry might work with the NEAC to ensure students become marketable.

He said public universities must conduct market surveys and inform the ministry of the results before introducing new courses.