

Study on meritocra

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Dr Mahathir: We will also look into use of quotas

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Government will carry out a study on whether meritocracy or a new system combined with the quota system will be used in admission to public universities next year to ensure fairness for all races.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this had to be done as the increase in Bumiputera intake this year was totally unexpected. He said meritocracy had actually been planned as a wake-up call to the Malays with initial expectations of a drop in admission.

"We did not expect it to lead to an increase in Bumiputeras in universities. We thought their numbers would drop. We will study if we are being fair to all races in university intake," the Prime Minister said after opening the 56th MIC annual general assembly at Bangunan Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah in Shah Alam today.

Dr Mahathir said the imbalance in university intake was expected to correct itself from next year when more non-Bumiputeras are admitted to Sijil Tinggi

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for university admission

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Persekolahan Malaysia classes.

"Few non-Bumiputeras have been entering STPM classes and this has resulted in fewer Chinese and Indians getting places in universities. If more non-Bumiputera students take the STPM, surely their numbers will also increase in universities next year."

Asked about the palpable air of disappointment earlier among delegates who had expected the Prime Minister to make an announcement on meritocracy, he said Indians had to understand that the Government had a responsibility to increase the overall number of Bumiputera students in institutions of higher learning.

This was because of the negligible number of Bumiputeras in private universities and colleges which were monopolised by non-Bumiputeras.

While efforts were being made to help improve the educational standing of non-Bumiputeras, especially Indians, he said this took time and was a long-term effort.

"The Government has provided new schools for Indians. But we cannot do it overnight. It takes time to allocate funds for these things."

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir referred to MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu's statement in his welcome speech that Indians nationwide were waiting for word from the Prime Minister on the issue.

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Not the right time for merit-based system

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Samy Vellu had said the party felt this was not the right time for meritocracy as Indian students, with their weak socio-economic background, needed more time to prepare themselves to meet the challenges.

"When the matter was publicised, there were thousands of inquiries from the Indian community. My only answer to them was to hold on as the matter was left in the good hands of the Prime Minister," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government could not drop the system of meritocracy as this could result in a loss of credibility.

"We promised to use meritocracy and cannot change this decision just because we have found that the number of Bumiputeras has increased and non-Bumiputeras decreased.

"When we decided to use meritocracy, it was an unknown system to us. We had a feeling that Bumiputera numbers would fall but we were totally shocked when the opposite happened."

Dr Mahathir said the socio-economic standing of Indians had improved tremendously over the years.

Many had become doctors, lawyers, engineers besides holding senior positions in the government and private sectors.

"I find that many have quietly become millionaires, having business interests in other countries. Recently, when I visited Morocco, Bahrain and Libya, there were Indian businessmen in my delegation."

On Indians in the plantation sector, he said those who were left behind wanted to live like their ancestors with their future in the hands of their employers.

The Government, he said, had ensured that these workers were not oppressed by their employers by enabling the introduction of better housing, wages and health and educational facilities.